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BOARD OF TRUSTEES GOVERNING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

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BOARD OF TRUSTEES GOVERNING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I appreciate everyone who provided support and encouragement to me throughout my graduate school experience. Noteworthy accomplishments are a result of support and assistance from others and the success of this research study was due to the assistance of many people. I dedicate this accomplishment to my children, Caroline and Brittney, for their love and support throughout my graduate degree program. I also dedicate my educational accomplishments to my parents Albert and Carole Prater, who have always been supportive of me and provided words of encouragement along the way.

I feel very fortunate to be completing my degree at The University of Texas at Austin under the mentorship of Dr. John Roueche. I would like to thank Dr. Roueche for his support, guidance and advice. I am also grateful to Dr. Walter Bumphus for his encouragement and help to keep me on course; Dr. Byron McClenney for his mentorship and guidance through Achieving the Dream and the Board of Trustees Institute; Dr. Norvell Northcutt for helping me to remain focused and for teaching me the dissertation writing process; Dr. Barry Brummett for allowing me view the world from a different perspective through his class and his contribution on my dissertation committee. All the professors at The University of Texas at Austin have shown and demanded high standards and scholarship.

I would also like to thank the Board members who participated in this study: Mr. Wayne Gray, Ms. Catherine McHaney, Ms. Marie Flickinger and Mr. Jerry Hinojosa. I appreciate your willingness to graciously and generously give your time in addition to

sharing your wisdom and experiences. Without your participation, this study would not have been possible.

In addition, I appreciate Ruth Thompson, Beverly Hurbace, Reid Watson, Hortensia Palomares, Dr. Martha Ovando, and Linda Overton for helping me along the way. Each person I worked with was gracious with their time and dedication to guiding me through the maze of graduate school processes.

I would also like to thank Block 62 and Block 63 for their friendship and encouragement. I am fortunate to have many life long friends that I will treasure and who gave me the strength and encouragement to keep going.

Also, I am grateful to Andy Newman at Western Nebraska Community College and Dr. Lynn C. Kreider, President of Colby Community College, for reviewing and editing my dissertation. Your critiques and recommendations helped me to clarify and strengthen my research and I appreciate the enormous amount of time you each dedicated to reviewing this document.

Finally, I am grateful to Dr. Kreider for encouraging me to pursue my Ph.D. in the Community College Leadership Program. It has been the best experience of my professional career. Thank you.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES GOVERNING FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Publication No. _____

Wendi Carol Prater, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2009

Supervisor: John E. Roueche, Jr.

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent community college trustees understand student success and the processes they used to prioritize student success practices at their institutions. This study used qualitative and quantitative methods that included several analyses.

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

The American dream embodies freedom for all individuals to pursue their goals to achieve success and pursue their hope for a better future. Access to education is one opportunity many people seek to achieve their American dream. As open-door institutions, community colleges provide access to anyone seeking a post-secondary education. As a result of broad unrestricted access, many students who attend community colleges have multiple social and academic challenges to overcome in order to achieve their dream of a college education.

Helping others to overcome their challenges to achieve success is a goal for educators. Those who choose education as a career do so because they want to help others to learn and to help others to be successful. Hence, many educators feel that teaching is a profession which impacts the lives of others in a positive manner that hopefully makes the world a better place in which to live.

In partnership with professional educators, community college trustees commit themselves to serving the community in hopes of making a difference and improving the lives of others. The manner in which colleges are governed can add value to the institutions; therefore, through their policymaking role and fiduciary responsibly, governing board members lead colleges and affect student academic achievement.

Community College Mission

In the early 20th century, many people advocated for a two-year educational alternative to a four-year college degree. Advocates included students and parents,

educators, businesses, and government officials. By majority consensus, American leaders recognized that the key to our country's continued strength was to develop an educated and skilled workforce (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2007b; K. M. McClenney, 2004a). Subsequently, community colleges were formed to fill unmet needs in education, which included providing opportunities to students who might not otherwise go to college, as well as training and retraining workers for business and industry.

Today, community colleges continue to support this mission through diverse educational programs focused on the needs of the communities and regions which they serve. Likewise, no other segment of higher education is more responsive to its community and workforce needs than the community college (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2007b).

Student Academic Trends

Students, educators, and stakeholders desire to help students succeed; sadly, most college students are not successful academically. This is unfortunate because students do not enroll in college intending to fail any more than educators intend to fail their students. According to McClenney et al., (2007):

Only 11 percent of African –American and 21 percent of Hispanic students entering community colleges in 1995 completed a degree within five years, as compared with 28 percent of white students (Bailey et al., 2004). These degree completion rates for African-American and Hispanic students were much lower at community colleges than at four-year

institutions, where 43 percent and 45 percent [of students complete] respectively. Degree completion rates for first-time undergraduates in the lowest socioeconomic status quartiles were also much lower than overall student completion rates (Bailey et al., 2005). These statistics are consistent with the U.S. Department of Education's (2002) findings that only about one in 10 students who enters a community college completes a bachelor's degree within five years, and that one is less likely to be a low-income student or a student of color.

As the data clearly indicates, it is pertinent that trustees and educators work together to reverse these disturbing trends. In addition, these academic challenges and trends indicate that many students abandon educational goals and their hopes of self-improvement. Trustees and educators who understand and monitor student data at their colleges have an opportunity to know where students face the greatest challenges in academic success. However, at institutions where student data information is lacking, the issues may go undetected and therefore unaddressed.

Using Data to Address Student Challenges

As a result of low academic achievement, demands for accountability reform have increased as community stakeholders, trustees, and educators seek to improve student success. National goals and state governmental demands for increased accountability are driven by the desire for the U.S. to retain its academically competitive lead in a global society. However, the methods needed to improve student success in higher education vary among policymakers as the pressures for accountability continue to grow.

While strategies may vary, once trustees and educators become aware of the issue and analyze student data, they can begin working together to develop “data-informed” strategies and interventions to address student needs. By using data to develop a plan of action, community colleges can devote time and resources to areas of the college that will be most effective at helping students to reach their goals. These views are based on the research of Roueche et al., (2001, p. 5):

Increased awareness and improved data collection appear to indicate that colleges are more sensitive to the important step of tying their mission statements to their indicators of effectiveness, experimenting with measurement strategies and fine-tuning the most applicable measures to their own institution...Every successful college we know of committed hard work and time; there are no “overnight success” stories.

As open door institutions, community colleges face a challenging job of serving the entire student population. This is in direct contrast to selected admissions universities, which serve only a selected portion of the student population. According to Cohen (1990, p. 439) for many community college students, “the choice is not between the community college and the senior residential institution; it is between the community college and nothing.” In addition to providing opportunities for academic success to each student, community college trustees and educators are faced with the challenge of providing open access to higher education for all students. McClenney et al., (2007) concludes that:

As more attention is given to accountability in higher education, community colleges face the challenge of maintaining their commitment to access while increasing the success of their students, particularly those from minority and lower-income populations. To accomplish this, an increasing number of advocates and critics assert that colleges must pursue efforts aimed at transformational change at the heart of the institution, not boutique programs in the institutional margins (K. M. McClenney, 2004a). In other words, community colleges must change how they do business to create environments and systems in which all students succeed.

Therefore, trustees and educators need to closely examine their college's student data and then commit to making the changes needed to help students succeed. By acknowledging and accepting the challenges that at-risk student populations bring, success can be achieved when colleges marry the goals of access and excellence which most critics argue are mutually exclusive (Roueche & Roueche, 1999, p. 43).

Student Achievement Links to Career Advancement and Community Development

Providing students access to higher education and improving their opportunities to succeed academically increases the probability that students will achieve their educational goals. For most students, earning a college degree or certificate is the first step towards career advancement. According to Dr. Kay McClenney (2004a), opportunity in the U.S. is more and more a function of education. Unfortunately, unless students are academically successful, their goal of a better job may never materialize. It's predicted that over 60% of new jobs created by 2014 will require some postsecondary

education; therefore, the fastest growing and best paying jobs in the new economy are those that require at least some college experience (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2005; K. M. McClenney, 2004a).

Educational shortcomings are costly for both students and communities. For communities, it is critical to their social and economic health that students succeed in college. According to Dr. Kay McClenney (2004a), the more educated people are, the more likely they are to be employed, pay taxes, vote, and provide for the educational and health related needs of their children. They are also less likely to be dependent on public support or in prison (K. M. McClenney, 2004a). Hence, postsecondary education of citizens is a necessity for communities to thrive.

Likewise, communities thrive when local businesses and industries are successful; however, concerns were raised by the documented poor performance of U.S. students on academic assessments regarding the lack of skills by citizens to improve our economic productivity (Sum et al., 2002). For business and industries dependent on trained and educated workers, higher education serves a vital role as a local, regional, and national investment strategy. In an increasingly competitive global marketplace, investing in student academic success is seen as critical to economic growth and international positioning (Friedman, 2005; Gates, 2007). America's success will be determined by its economic competitiveness as the country shifts from an industrial based to an information based economy (Carnevale & Desrochers, 2004). The stakes, then, are higher than ever before as more and more companies and jobs move overseas. The United States cannot reclaim jobs lost to international competition without a well-trained and educated

workforce (Friedman, 2005). Increasing America's average level of education by one year can increase economic growth by five to 15 percent (Kruegar & Lindahl, 1999). In today's uncertain global environment, the United States must strive to stay ahead and cannot afford to fall behind.

Governing Board Member Roles and Responsibilities

Trustees have numerous roles and responsibilities on governing boards including overseeing college finances, capital projects, human resource management, community resource development, and academic affairs. Ultimately, governing boards have a responsibility to citizens in communities to ensure that colleges stay true to their stated missions and to ensure that the needs of the communities are met through the programs and services of the colleges. Depending on the organizational structure of an institution, trustees can either be elected or appointed to their positions on the board. Some trustees may delegate portions of their decision-making authority to college administrators; however, it is the trustees who are ultimately responsible to the community for the outcomes of those decisions.

Just as board members of a private corporation need to understand and monitor throughout the year the processes of the business they oversee, trustees need to understand and monitor throughout the year processes within the college. In addition to monitoring graduation and certificate completion rates, particular emphasis should be focused on academic data of students such as semester enrollments, course completion rates and student retention data. Trustees are responsible for acting on behalf of the public and have a fiduciary responsibility, which includes the academic quality of the

college's departments and programs. Consequently, since trustees have final authority to approve the policies and procedures of the college affecting student success interventions at their institution, they are accountable to the community for student success at their institutions.

Unfortunately according to Ewell (2006, p. vii), many higher education boards typically focus their priorities on finances, facilities, and personnel actions; only occasionally do they examine academic programs and student success initiatives. It is essential for board members to take an active part in discussing and monitoring academic achievement with administrators and educators at the college. According to McClenney (1997b, p. 224), it is fundamental to have a mechanism in place to enhance student success so that trustees and leaders can tend to the ongoing process of student interventions.

Likewise, it is important for boards to distinguish and clearly define the line between monitoring processes and micromanaging the institution. While trustees have a responsibility to understand, observe, and analyze the results of student success interventions, it is the responsibility of administrators and faculty to develop the teaching objectives and techniques needed to reach the college's student success goals. Therefore, understanding the roles of trustees and college personnel is important to the health of the institution and the success of the college in meeting its mission and vision.

Role of Achieving the Dream

By assisting community college trustees and educators as they sift through the web of student success initiatives, Achieving the Dream [AtD] at The University of

Texas at Austin provides support to trustees and educators in developing institutional plans for student success. Achieving the Dream is an initiative that focuses on improving student academic achievement for low-income students and students of color (Achieving the Dream, 2007). Students should be placed at the heart of every institution's vision, mission and programs.

Achieving the Dream (2007) is a multiyear national initiative to help more community college students succeed. The initiative is particularly concerned about student groups that traditionally have faced significant barriers to success, including students of color and low-income students. Achieving the Dream works on multiple fronts, including efforts at community colleges and in research, public engagement and public policy. It emphasizes the use of data to drive change. Community colleges enroll almost half of all U.S. undergraduate students, and the American public appreciates their commitment to providing broad access. But access alone isn't enough. Currently fewer than half of community college students meet their educational goals. Achieving the Dream is working to help more students earn certificates or degrees that open the door to better jobs, further education, and greater opportunity.

The Achieving the Dream Board of Trustee Institute provides an opportunity for trustees to network with one another and to discuss policies that can help increase postsecondary student academic success. A concern among trustees and educators is that government policymakers may establish imprecise systems or policies for higher

education similar to secondary education's No Child Left Behind initiative. This is adding urgency to efforts by college leaders, state higher education executive officers, and others to influence policy discussions.

Governing board members will need to examine data to determine if changes are needed among the procedures, processes and policies at their colleges to enhance student success. Achieving the Dream through the Board of Trustees Institute seeks to provide trustees with professional development in student success. According to McClenney and McClenney (2007):

The Board of Trustees Institute provides an opportunity for Board of Trustee members, CEO delegates and resident faculty to share and elevate knowledge of effective governance to improve student success. The Institute provides an opportunity to begin the process of building a learning community focused on data-informed governance for student success that links college and university Boards of Trustees and CEOs in a shared endeavor. Trustees acquire resources and build a common body of knowledge pertaining to integrating a student success agenda into strategic and master plans, quality enhancement plans and other institutional initiatives. The institute contributes to trustees and CEOs as lifelong learners and advocates of learning in service to improve student success. In addition, the institute enhances the understanding of trustees and CEOs roles and responsibilities in identifying gaps and establishing policies, goals and priorities that emerge from environmental, institutional and

student outcomes data. Finally, the institute establishes a foundation to assess institutional, board and CEO performance related to policies and strategies to improve student success.

It is essential for trustees to closely work with college administrators and to commit to changing policies as needed for colleges to be successful in achieving their goals of student success (Roueche & Roueche, 1999).

Role of the Association of Community College Trustees

Preparing trustees for their role on college governing boards, the Association of Community College Trustees [ACCT] provides resources for board members such as publications, professional development and networking opportunities.

The Association of Community College Trustees [ACCT] (2007a) is a non-profit educational organization of governing boards, representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,200 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States. These community professionals, business officials, public policy leaders, and leading citizens offer their time and talent to serve on the governing boards of this century's most innovative higher education institutions- community, junior, and technical colleges-and make decisions that affect more than 1,200 colleges and over 11 million students annually.

Organizational Culture of Academic Success

The personality of a college can be found in its organizational culture and is made up of its values and beliefs as stated in its vision, mission statement, and institutional

goals and objectives. While an organization's culture can be difficult to encapsulate, it is something that is intuitively sensed.

The culture of an organization is shaped and formed from the leadership at the top of the organization. For community colleges, the leadership of governing board members shapes organizational culture. According to Below (1987), leadership is defined as the process by which an individual determines direction, influences a group, and directs progress toward a specific goal or organizational mission. As a governing body, the Board of Trustees for community colleges determines the direction of the college through their influence and policy decision-making authority.

As college trustees begin the process of routinely monitoring and understanding student achievement data, cultural transitions within the organization may be necessary to inspire lasting changes. Community college trustees in the 21st century, therefore, will need to be flexible and accepting of change because effective leadership is critical to change management (Higgs, 2003). Also, through the process of transitioning the institution's culture, board members may find it is necessary for the college to change some policies and procedures, such as organizational structure, funding, or incentives. Changing the culture of a college can take considerable time and effort; there are no easy shortcuts. However, it is important for trustees to begin the process of making organizational changes as needed so that the success of under-prepared community college students becomes the explicit priority for the college (Achieving the Dream, 2005). Therefore, the first step to enhancing academic achievement is to develop an organizational culture focused on reaching student success goals.

Change management defines and adopts organizational strategies, structures, procedures, and technologies to deal with change in external conditions and environments (Society for Human Resource Management, 2007). In the information era, success and failure are often directly linked to innovation and evolution; therefore, successful colleges must be prepared to continually change to reach their strategic goals and objectives. Through the change process, adaptability allows trustees to develop policies to assist the changing needs of students. Godin (2003) explains in the book *Purple Cow* how many of the traditional rules of organizational operations are obsolete. To be successful, organizations need to stand out as unique, like a purple cow, by focusing on the success of small target groups (Godin, 2003). It is important for colleges to seek out how they are uniquely positioned to help students succeed; for example, student engagement is a key factor to student success. Two components of student engagement contribute to success. The first component is the time and effort students put into their studies and other activities. The second component is the way the institution provides resources and organizes services to induce students to participate in and benefit from such activities. To be successful, trustees examining organizational change at colleges and universities may need to address these critical issues.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Community college governing board members create and maintain policies to guide the institution. However, little is known concerning how knowledgeable governing boards are regarding student success. In addition, little is known about governing board members' student success policymaking actions and behaviors.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent community college governing boards use mechanisms to understand or monitor student success. In addition, this study sought to understand how, if at all, governing boards alter or prioritize their policymaking agenda by reviewing or analyzing briefings of student success interventions.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

1. Community college, College: A two-year public institution of higher education with a mission to serve the educational needs of the community (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2007a). This definition also includes Technical and Junior Colleges that have a core mission to serve their communities.
2. Governing board members, Board of Trustees, Trustees, Board members: In this research study the terms will be used interchangeably. Each refers to the legally authorized appointed or elected body of a community college responsible to govern the institution and ensure that the mission, goals and academic success of students are aligned with the needs of the community (Association of Community College Trustees [ACCT], 2007b).
3. Trustee or Governing board member, Board member: An individual member of a community college governing board.
4. CEO: or chief executive officer is also referred to as chancellor or president.

5. Student success: According to Achieving the Dream (2005) the definition of student success is “institutional focus of efforts to improve the instruction, services, supports, and learning opportunities available to students who enroll in community colleges”. Colleges track the following student data (Achieving the Dream, 2005):
 - Successful completion of the courses students take;
 - Advancement from remedial to credit-bearing courses;
 - Enrollment in and successful completion of gatekeeper courses such as Math or English courses;
 - Enrollment from one semester to the next;
 - Earned degrees and / or certificates
6. Achieving the Dream: A multi-year initiative to help community college students succeed. Achieving the Dream works on multiple fronts, including efforts at community colleges, in research, public engagement and public policy while emphasizing the use of data to drive change (Achieving the Dream, 2007).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To what extent do community college governing boards use mechanisms to understand or monitor student success?
2. To what extent do governing boards review or analyze briefings of student success interventions?
3. How, if at all, do governing boards alter or prioritize their student success policymaking agenda?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study sought to understand the actions and behaviors of community college governing boards. In addition, this study examined the effect, if any, governing boards have on student success interventions. Little research exists on this topic since most higher education literature has focused on governing board member's roles and responsibilities rather than their actions and behaviors. Therefore, the results of this study will expand the literature base.

The results of this study sought to illuminate the extent to which governing board members monitor student success initiatives. The study also sought to understand whether colleges experienced organizational culture transitions in the early stages of their participation in the Achieving the Dream initiative. In addition, the research hoped to understand if governing boards altered board priorities and the college's priorities with a focus on student success. The results of this study indicate that trustee professional development programs focused on student success is necessary and recommended in order to keep board members abreast of innovative processes and initiatives at peer colleges. In addition, this study highlights the importance of networking opportunities for board members to share their student success recommendations and accomplishments.

SUMMARY

Due to the changing needs of today's diverse student body, it is critical for trustees and educators to evolve to meet the needs of students in the communities they serve. By understanding and monitoring student success initiatives, board members can increase the success of students at their institution; therefore, trustees need to understand

and monitor processes affecting academic achievement concentrating on the value each contributes to student success. Educational institutions are charged with developing individuals who will be successful in the workforce as well as lifelong learners. By understanding the changes needed at the institution through a review of student data, board members equip themselves with information to make data-informed decisions.

Clear alignment of all institutional student achievement priorities increases the opportunities for colleges to successfully reach their vision, mission, and philosophy. Moreover, it is important that resources for student success align with the educational mission and all college resources. Therefore, trustees, as members of the educational community, must focus on student needs and should place them at the heart of the college's vision toward student success (K. M. McClenney, 2004a; O'Banion, 1997; Roueche & Baker, 1987).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

ACADEMIC QUALITY FOCUSED ON ACCOUNTABILITY

A Test of Leadership, a report submitted by the U.S. Secretary of Education's Commission of the Future of Higher Education (U.S. Department of Education, 2006) forecasts that higher education may soon undergo changes in accountability measures. In the past, colleges measured accountability according to federal accreditation standards or state and regional reporting standards. For most colleges, academic success was measured in the quality of the students admitted, number of students enrolled, and the number of credits enrolled by students. However, stakeholders today want colleges to be accountable for government funding and are seeking accountability for measures such as student persistence toward their stated goals, student retention, course completion rates and graduation rates. Academic quality is the desired goal. According to Johnston (2006) and Ewell (2006) there is a troubling gap between the public perceptions of what constitutes academic quality and the complex realities facing institutions and their governing boards. For stakeholders, the quality of the learning experience is a primary indicator of institutional effectiveness and the reputation of the college. Recently, pressure from stakeholders to improve student outcomes and increase college accountability of student success has increased (Achieving the Dream, 2005; Bumphus, 1997, pp. 102-109; Giegerich, 2006).

Today's accountability movement spawned by *A Test of Leadership* was preceded by the report *A Nation At Risk* in 1983. In that report, the U.S. Department of Education (1983) concluded "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded

by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people”.

The report further explained that student test scores were decreasing, academic standards were diminishing, and students in the United States were falling behind their overseas cohorts. The emphasis of educational accountability measures and outcomes arose as a result of community leaders and educators responding to statistics signaling under prepared American youth (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

During the 1980s and 90s, a focus on educational accountability grew and continues to be a strong force in shaping educational policy and practices today (Linn, 2000). Consequently, board members need to understand the motives for accountability. In addition to many educational agencies, external pressures from federal and state leaders are creating a need for colleges to be accountable for student success and to focus on accountability reform in an effort to improve higher education.

BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Community colleges have a unique and rich history as an educational bridge between high school completion and a university four-year degree. In the early twentieth century, Dr. William Rainey Harper at the University of Chicago and other prominent educators are credited with beginning public conversations to develop a two-year alternative to a four-year degree program in the United States (Griffith, 1976; Roueche & Baker, 1987; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Smith, 2000). In designing the concept of the community college, Dr. Harper literally divided the four year baccalaureate in half, naming them “Junior College” and “Senior College” (Eells, 1931; Roueche & Roueche, 1993). However, the division of the college did not accomplish its intended purpose, so

Dr. Harper turned to the local secondary school system to establish a junior college as an extension of high school in order to prepare students for college coursework. As a result of Dr. Harper's initiative, the first junior college was established in Joliet, IL in 1901; hence, Dr. Harper is credited as the father of Junior Colleges (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2007b; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Smith, 2000). Soon other communities throughout the United States began establishing junior and community colleges so that citizens could benefit from two-year degree programs. Over time, junior and community colleges separated themselves from the governance of universities and secondary institutions to develop their own governance structure. Because of the influence of the university and K-12 systems in the formation of community colleges, the governance structure of community colleges is a unique blending of both secondary and university systems. Therefore, while community college governing boards have similarities to the university and K-12 system governance structure, they are unique. For example, according to Smith (2000):

In some states, university systems established junior colleges as branch campuses, while in others, public schools were the progenitors (p. 2). The universities, public school districts, or local communities that created the colleges passed on their different values and approaches to governance. The colleges share many characteristics with their sponsors, and the colleges' governing boards inherited certain values and ways of doing things from their progenitor boards (p. 7).

Through their formation, community college governing boards sought to adopt and balance their governance structure based on shared philosophies with their parent systems. Similarities to the university system of governance are apparent in the magnitude of authority and responsibility that is shared by board members and CEOs in addition to the colleges shared governance structure (Smith, 2000, p. 7). By comparison, similarities to the traditional K-12 system of governance are seen through the substantial voice board members have in institutional operations, the expectation that community values and priorities are reflected in the mission of the college, and the assurance that the mission of community colleges is focused on being responsive to community needs (Smith, 2000, p. 7). Therefore, community college governance structures are a unique blending of K-12 and university governance structures, which distinguishes their role in higher education.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNING BOARDS

All community college governance structures are not exactly the same. Nationwide variances are apparent depending on the educational philosophy of the citizens in the region or state served by the institution. For example, according to Smith (2000):

Most colleges are governed by local boards, some of which are also responsible to a state governing or coordinating board. Colleges in states with no local boards are either part of a state university system or are governed or coordinated by a state board (p. 5). About half of the states have elected boards, mostly in the western United States. Appointed

boards are most often found in the eastern half of the United States. The number of members on local and state boards ranges from five to thirty. The ways that trustees are elected or appointed also vary from state to state and college to college. Members of local boards usually live in the communities that are served by the colleges. The colleges' regions may be divided into districts, and trustees are appointed or elected by the area they live in or represent. Trustees may be appointed or become candidates for election by virtue of their political party affiliation or connections with special interest groups. Criteria for appointed trustees might include that trustees represent certain stakeholders, such as the public schools, local industry, or local government. Appointing authorities vary from state to state, and include governors, legislators, local government councils and boards of education" (p. 6). Local boards represent local communities. State boards vary greatly in how much regulatory oversight they provide, but all are responsible for ensuring that the state interests are considered in decision-making. In states where there are no local boards, state system boards have the responsibility for creating avenues that require local colleges to respond to their local communities (p. 16).

Therefore, trustees represent the citizens of the community in which they serve and ensure that the college through its mission, vision, goals, and academic programs meets the needs of the region served. According to Smith (2000, p. 16):

All Boards of Trustees – local, multi-college and statewide – are responsible for ensuring that their colleges are integral parts of their communities and serve their ever-changing needs. Effective boards consist of people who come together to form a cohesive group to articulate and represent the public interest, establish a climate for learning and personal growth, and monitor the effectiveness of the institution. Boards are ultimately accountable to the community for the performance and welfare of the institutions they govern. They ensure that colleges have the leadership needed to meet community needs and standards.

CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRUSTEES

The characteristics of community college trustees are important to understanding the dynamics of the governing board. According to Smith (2000, pp. 213-214) the following are characteristics of trustees in 1997:

- Annual family income - 23% less than \$55,000; 41% have an income \$55,000-100,000; 36% have an income over \$100,000
- Political party affiliation – 43% Republican, 42% Democrat, 14% Independent
- Method of trustee selection – 35% appointed by governor, appointed by local officials, 30% elected
- Time spent per week on board business – 7% 15 hours or more, 19% six hours to 10 hours, 63% two hours to five hours, 12% less than two hours

According to Smith (2000, p. 214), the average length of service for board members was 8.7 years. In addition, Smith (2000, p. 214) listed trustees top ten efforts expended as a board member in order of the effort expended:

1. Promoting the college
2. Budget and financial review and approval
3. Policy development
4. Assessing institutional performance
5. Setting institutional goals
6. Strategic planning
7. Assessing CEO effectiveness
8. Community outreach
9. Legislative advocacy
10. Facilities and property review

Comparisons of the characteristics of trustees in 1977 to characteristics of trustees in 1997 are examined in Table 1. Analysis shows that more board members were female than in the past. However, by ethnicity, boards have changed very little and are represented by mostly white board members. In addition, the average age of trustees has risen slightly from 52 years of age to 58 years of age. Finally, trustees in 1977 were primarily employed in business or professional services; in contrast, trustees in 1997 were primarily employed in professional service and education.

Table 1. A comparison profile of community college trustees from 1977 to 1997

Variables	Year: 1977¹	Variables	Year: 1997²
Gender			
Female	17.8%		33%
Male	82.2%		67%
Ethnicity			
Black, non-Hispanic	5.6%		8%
Hispanic	1.4%		2%
White, non-Hispanic	91.6%		87%
Other minority	1.4%		3%
Age			
Average age	51.9%		57.50%
Occupation			
Business	33.9% ³		17% ⁵
Education	8.9%		24%
Professional services	47.4% ⁴		51% ⁶
Unclassified	9.8%		8%

¹ (Drake, 1977)

² (Smith, 2000, p. 213)

³ Executive level

⁴ Clergy, physician, dentist, partner of law firm, practicing attorney, elected official, blue collar worker, social worker, journalist, accountant, farmer/rancher, homemaker, artist/writer/musician, retired

⁵ Business owner or manager

⁶ Professions other than education, sales, service, office work, farmer, rancher, forester

TRUSTEES' ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Governing boards are ultimately responsible for the welfare of the college and ensure that community needs are addressed. College trustees and administrators seek to improve the quality of life for others in their community through academic achievement and seek to identify needs in the community that can be addressed by the college.

Therefore, according to Boggs (2006, p. 3) effective board members:

Act on behalf of the owners of colleges to ensure that they are operating efficiently and in agreement with their mission. The appointing body or

the voting public entrusts the college's property and the interests of current and future students and employees to these boards. For public community colleges, the owners are the residents of the state and geographic district that the college serves. The CEO reports to the board and is responsible for carrying out the policies established by the board.

Smith (2000, p. 17) found that an effective institution is well managed when:

Strong effective boards help to create strong effective institutions by performing well their unique governing responsibility. In short, they act as a unit, set policy direction, they employ, support, and evaluate the chief executive officer, define policy standards for college operations, monitor institutional performance, create a positive climate, support and advocate the interests of the institution, and lead as a thoughtful, educated team.

Strong leadership from trustees can have a positive effect on student success. According to McClenney (1984, p. 32), "given clarity of purpose and high standards of performance, it is then possible to seek the involvement of all who are a part of the enterprise, and all who seek to move the institution to achieve the desired outcomes".

Organizational Climate and Culture

Board members and administration through their leadership and by the example of their actions establish the climate and culture of the college. An organization's culture can be sensed by the goals that are established and its emphasis of particular priorities. Therefore, trustees and CEOs need to examine their level of commitment to student success in addition to the level of importance student success holds at the college. If the

college has not established a climate and culture focused on student success, creating one is an important first step in the process for board members.

With an increased focus from stakeholders on student achievement, board members need to include student success to their list of priorities. Truman State University Trustee member Peter Ewell (2006) states that trustees:

Are accustomed to looking after the financial health and fiscal integrity of our institutions. Virtually every board meeting we attend features reviews of budgets, revenue projections, capital needs, or the approval of specific expenditures. Many of us also sit on the Foundation boards of our institutions, where examining specific investments and associated returns is the principal order of business. But at many institutions, the board only rarely gets to look directly at the heart of the academic enterprise: the quality of teaching and learning. As in other realms of institutional operations, it is up to the faculty and administration to uphold and improve academic quality. But it is up to the board to understand it and see that it gets done. Ensuring academic quality is a fiduciary responsibility; it is as much part of our role as board members as ensuring that the institution has sufficient resources and is spending them wisely (p. vii). [Therefore], the board must be able to stand behind the competitiveness of the institution's graduates with respect to their knowledge and skills and the academic integrity of the curriculum that prepared them (p. xiv).

However, change can be a difficult process and trustees must be prepared to address any resistance to changes from their community and from personnel within the college. At some institutions, trustees will have to learn new ways that disrupt old habits because change rarely happens without stress, disagreement, and resistance (Chait et al., 2005, p. 165).

Identifying Critical Issues

We live during a time of constant change. As communities change, the critical issues to be addressed within the community also change over time. Trustees need to gather the most current information they can on local, state, and national issues in order to lead the college effectively through today's changing environment.

As the community begins to transition, trustees must be willing to adjust and react to forecasted changes in order to meet the academic needs of the community. Board members need to be flexible and accepting of change because their leadership is critical to change management at the colleges (Conner, 1995). For community colleges to succeed, the ability of trustees to manage and to talk openly to all stakeholders about change is essential.

Listening to Public Opinion

By listening to public opinion, board members are able to understand the values, priorities, and needs of the community. Valuing public opinion is essential to the core mission of community colleges, which is to meet the academic and workforce preparation needs of the communities they serve.

In order to gauge public opinion, boards need to know as much about the community as possible. There are many ways to gauge opinions and perceptions of academic need and effectiveness (Ewell, 2006, p. 40; K. M. McClenney, 2004b). Trustees can review newspaper articles, editorials and letters to the editor of local newspapers. Also, board members can gather information by attending community events and through their involvement in civic organizations where they have an opportunity to talk to other community leaders and citizens. After gathering information, trustees can then react through policymaking to respond to community interest and values. According to Smith (2000, pp. 18-23):

Few colleges serve populations that come from one background or culture; boards have a responsibility to accommodate and celebrate multiple perspectives. They are responsible for balancing and integrating the wide variety of interests and needs into policies that benefit the common good and the future of their region. State system boards articulate state interests, which provide a broad framework for local interests. They gain this knowledge by studying information provided by college staff on regional demographic, economic and social trends, by being aware of issues facing the community, and by talking with other community leaders and members of other boards. [Trustees represent] multiple viewpoints and discuss the issues in public. Effective trustees promote the college in the community and seek support for it from local, state and national policymakers.

There are many aspects to the board’s responsibilities as shown in Table 2.

According to Smith (2000, p. 50), boards need to:

Table 2. Trustee's responsibilities to the public

Represent the public
Connect with the community
Be knowledgeable about the community
Engage in public discussion of issues and policies
Protect the colleges’ pursuit of their missions
Uphold the image of the college
Integrate and balance multiple perspectives
Be advocates for the college with local, state and national policymakers
Support the college foundation and fundraising efforts

Governing boards represent the interest of the “common good” and are accountable to the community as a whole; therefore, boards exist to act on behalf of a public “ownership” (Carver, 2006). Effective boards assure that the “owners” receive a good return on the money they invest because they are accountable to the public (Smith, 2000, p. 50).

According to Boggs (2006, p. 34):

CEOs cannot control contacts between board members and students, faculty, staff and community members, but they can help inform board members about how they should deal with information relayed in these contacts. However, the board member should refer issues of concerns

through appropriate administrative channels. Board members should listen but reserve decisions for the board room, CEO or faculty/ staff committees.

Students

Student opinions can be gathered from sources such as student satisfaction surveys or student engagement surveys. According to Ewell (2006, p. 36), trustees should inquire about the extent to which student surveys are directed at the essential question of academic quality. Surveys such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CCSSE] are explicitly designed to solicit students' testimony about the quality of their academic experiences. Understanding the quality of the students experience is important because the more engaged students are the more likely they are to be academically successful. According to CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CCSSE], 2004):

CCSSE results give community colleges objective and relevant data about students' experiences at their colleges so they can better understand how they are engaging their students and identify areas for improvement.

CCSSE's survey focuses on institutional practices and student behaviors that promote student engagement.

By reviewing the survey results, board members can gauge student satisfaction and student engagement, which can lead to conversations with college administration and personnel in order to determine how students perform academically and how to enhance student success.

In addition to understanding student needs through surveys, some governing boards include students as members of the board. Therefore, trustees are able to receive first hand information from students serving as fellow board members. According to Boggs (2006, p. 19):

Some states have passed laws specifying that a student be a member of the college's Board of Trustees. Many Legislators have put students on boards in the belief that this will ensure that students' viewpoints are considered when the board deliberates. CEOs would be well advised to meet with student trustees regularly and provide opportunities for orientation and development.

At some colleges, students are elected from the student body to represent their interest on the governing board. Student trustees typically report activities of the board to the college's student government association. While some student trustees do not have the same responsibilities and voting rights as other board members, there are some student trustees who have all the rights and responsibilities as fellow members of the governing board.

Community Stakeholders

It is also critical for trustees to understand the concerns of community stakeholders (Fishkin, 1995). Community stakeholders could be governmental, civic, business and industry leaders or concerned citizens. Understanding the needs of each stakeholder provides key information to trustees that they are effectively providing academic programs to improve the quality of life for people in the community.

Information from community stakeholders can be gathered through face-to-face interactions with focus groups, advisory committees or the local Chamber of Commerce and trade associations.

Many community stakeholders are concerned about workforce development at community colleges since healthy communities are dependent on a strong labor force (Gillette, 2000). Job training is often a primary concern. Businesses and industry are particularly concerned about workforce training because they rely on qualified workers to operate and expand their businesses. Another primary concern is the ability of the college to provide degree programs and workforce training opportunities that respond quickly to changes that occur in their industries. Therefore, trustees are held accountable for fulfilling these needs and protecting the public's interest.

Faculty and Staff Members

It is important for trustees to gather opinion information from staff and faculty members who work on the front line of academic success. Employees that are in direct contact with students routinely each day are critical to effective student interventions. Hence, it is important for faculty and staff members to keep board members informed through reports approved and provided through the college's administration. According to Boggs (2006, p. 7):

Although conventional wisdom is that policy development is the prerogative of the board and administering those policies is the business of the CEO and the staff, in actual practice, trustees usually expect the CEO to recommend policies for the board's approval. Because the board relies

on the CEO to implement its policies, trustees cannot capably set policy in isolation from the CEO and the staff. Board members need to be briefed on how policy recommendations are brought to their attention. In colleges that have strong traditions of faculty and staff participation, internal committees and constituencies study thoroughly all policy change recommendations before they are brought to the board.

In addition, many governing boards have faculty member representatives serving on the board. By having a faculty member representative on the board, faculty can voice their concerns directly to board members.

Forming Partnerships in the Community

Partnerships and collaborations with other organizations are vital to community colleges (Kisker & Carducci, 2003). As state support of higher education dwindles, partnerships become essential. Most colleges develop mutually beneficial relationships with other organizations in the community in order to share common resources. Also, collaboration with other organizations can enrich efforts to address community issues through shared problem solving.

Trustees and CEOs establish community partnerships through their relationships in the community. These partnerships establish a foundation for understanding the needs of the community served by the college and the college's role in addressing community needs (Jackson & Glass, 2000). Partnerships also unite a community through information sharing and by forming strategies for measuring success. For trustees and CEOs,

building relationships in the community takes a considerable amount of time, but is necessary to the success of the college.

Communicating with Stakeholders

Effective communication is key to the success of any organization. Often problems that occur within an organization are the result of poor communication. A leader's communication should be focused, frequent, open, and honest. Effective communication benefits an organization by decreasing the occurrences of misperceptions and increasing its adaptability to changing conditions (Greenberg & Baron, 1993). To be effective, communication must include the clear transfer of information and a shared understanding of what that information means (Robbins, 1996). Communication through forums should be held for stakeholders to give input into the college's student success goals and objectives. Leaders should also allow stakeholders to express any concerns they may have about the college's plan. Stakeholders are not likely to trust or support student success efforts if they lack buy-in or leaders do not clearly communicate a plan of action. Communicating student success initiatives should be done frequently with all organizational stakeholders.

Strategic Planning

Once trustees have gathered information from the community and received input from community partners, the college's leadership can begin forming a strategic plan to determine the direction and focus of student success initiatives at the college. Through the formation of the strategic plan, the college's student success goals and objectives are clarified so that others in the organization understand the college's strategy for success.

According to Carver (2006, p. 104) and McClenney et al. (1991), it is essential that governing boards be forward thinking and have long-range plans.

Kaufman et al. (1992, p. 39) observed that “ strategic thinkers switch from dealing with one’s organization as a splintered aggregate of disassociated parts to dealing with one’s enterprise as an integrated holistic, ethical and responsible system”. Knapp (1991) suggested the “planning processes would be enhanced if greater efforts were aimed at linking budgets to strategic plans and if clear, well articulated planning processes involving all constituents are prepared”. A comprehensive strategic plan should include all organizational stakeholders such as students, faculty, staff, and community leaders. Together all stakeholders can develop the plan and determine the level of funding needed to support student success programs. The challenge for college governing boards and administrators is to link the strategic plan into a meaningful and useful model that is linked to the college’s budget.

Aligning the Budget to College’s Student Success Goals

Caiden (1988, p. 42) stated “long ago, when people wished to discern the shape of things to come, they looked to the stars; today they look at the budget”. Through budget planning, governing board members and college CEO’s decide how to distribute resources to operational departments and programs of the college. Some governing boards form financial committees that specifically focus and review budget items. After analyzing the financial reports, usually with the CEO, the committee then recommends revisions or approval of the budget to the full governing board. According to Case (1998,

p. 76), “preparing a budget is a tremendously important process for an organization: It translates the goals into workday numbers.”

The budget outlines the governing board’s intention and action plans; it is considered the instrument used to carry out plans and priorities. In addition, the budget is a management tool and the financial expression of the college’s intentions over the budget planning period as well as long-term financial outlook. According to Jones (1993, p. 7):

There is a need for strategic budgeting as well as strategic planning for an approach to budgeting that reflects an institution-wide perspective on resource allocation that focuses on the basic asset structure of the institution rather than on the prices of those assets, and that puts central administration in a proactive rather than a reactive role in this process.

Providing a clear path for the college is the goal of governing boards and CEO’s by proactively planning and strategically allocating the budget. Salluzzo (1999, p. 62) states “an institution that creates collaboration between planning and budgeting generally is one with clear direction and focused on achieving the goals established in the strategic plan.” Alignment of the budget to the goals of the college requires good communication between the governing board and college personnel about the needs of the institution. Rasmussen and Eichorn (2000, p. 11) agreed that “with the surge in interest in budgeting and planning, companies should be spending more time on improving their internal communication processes and streamlining their different planning processes and the integration between them”. Therefore, communication between both the governing board

and college administration is critical to the process of institutional strategic planning and the alignment of the plan to the strategic budgeting process. According to Chabotar (1999, p. 18), “ the essence of strategic budgeting is its explicit link to the institution’s strategic plan.”

According to McManis and Harvey (1978), the management process should help assure that decisions reached at all levels within the institution result in actions and activities and/or directions which contribute to the institutions goals, objectives, and supporting plans. Aligning the strategic plan to the budget plan is an orderly process of decision-making which can determine the direction of the institution by managing the operational activities of the college to their desired end.

Alignment lets the college know how effective and efficient it has been. Academic management activities of “goal setting, planning, organizing, coordinating, directing, evaluating, managing conflict and managing change intertwine with communication and decision-making to align all processes” (Wynn & Guditus, 1984). According to Wynn and Guditus (1984, pp. 72-73) the alignment is the “warp and weft of a fabric: identifiable individual strands woven together, reinforcing and interacting with each other, while functioning together as a whole”.

Personnel Management

Forming an organizational strategic plan is only effective if the college has personnel capable and willing to implement its goals and objectives. The college’s employees are key to the success of any student success initiative.

Success starts with hiring excellent leadership, in addition to outstanding faculty and staff members (Pfeffer, 1994). All employees hired by the college should be student-centered professionals. Trustees and administrators need to devote time and energy to ensure that processes are in place to hire employees with enthusiastic and positive attitudes. If employees are not a good match for the college and its students, supervisors may need to devote time to counseling and mentoring employees (Pfeffer, 1994). However, if personnel are carefully screened during the selection and hiring process, the amount of time spent developing outstanding employees is minimal.

Once the right people are employed, it is important to provide continued professional development opportunities so that personnel can remain current with changes in their field of expertise. Accordingly, trustees and administrators should examine strategic plans and budget priorities to determine if faculty and staff members receive support and release time for professional development activities that are critical to student success (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; Shults, 2001).

Trustee and CEO Relationship

The start of a good relationship between board members and the CEO begins with the selection of the CEO. Hiring the CEO is considered the most important task of the board because the CEO is the board's sole employee and serves the board by implementing the policies approved by the governing board. According to Smith (2000, p. 19), the CEO is the primary agent of the board and is the single most influential person in creating an outstanding institution; therefore, supporting the CEO is the board's most important responsibility.

The trustee and CEO relationship also influences the climate and culture of the institution. It's important for the president and board to view each other as a team because a good relationship between the board and the CEO is vital to a healthy institution. According to Boggs (2006, p. 1), "CEOs and their boards should be seen as a team whose members share common philosophies and objectives". Teams work best when members commit to work together and where teamwork is based on open communication, confidence, and trust. If the CEO and board members cannot work well together, an unhealthy relationship may form and the institution will struggle as a result. Therefore, according to McClenney (2004), "deciding to focus on issues and reinforcing the expectation that people of good will can come together to solve problems and set standards is an important step."

Policy Role

Policymaking is a central role of governing boards because boards approve all policies for the institution. In addition, policies set by the board guide the decisions of college personnel to design and implement programs and student success interventions. According to Carver (2006, p. 41):

Because policies permeate and dominate all aspects of organizational life, they present the most powerful lever for the exercise of leadership. Policy leadership clarifies, inspires and sets a tone of discourse that stimulates leadership in followers.

Therefore, through policymaking, the board establishes a culture for the institution.

"Boards of trustees create a positive climate when they focus on the future, act with

integrity, support risk-taking and challenge the CEO and college staff to strive for excellence” (Smith, 2000, p. 22).

In addition, through policymaking board members can set a climate for student success where all college programs and services are guided by the policy direction of the board members. By attending to policy content, a board can gain far more control over what matters in the organization and reduce the risk of getting lost in the details (Carver, 2006, p. 45). In the end, it is the board’s responsibility to adopt policies that define what the results of all the college’s efforts should be (Smith, 2000, p. 19). Governing boards provide direction and guidance to the college through their policies and trustees establish standards for the work of the college employees through the policies they approve (Smith, 2000, pp. 16-19).

Monitoring Institutional Effectiveness

By monitoring student achievement, trustees ensure the college is fulfilling its mission by tracking student academic progress. Boards need to regularly request and monitor reports related to student success such as retention and graduation rates. It is important for trustees and educators to collect, analyze and monitor student data at their institution to develop student success interventions geared toward their student populations’ unique needs. One size does not fit all. According to Smith (2000, p. 22):

Boards are responsible for holding colleges accountable for serving current and future community learning needs. As stated earlier, boards are responsible for setting the policy direction and defining the impact they expect their colleges to have on their communities. Once the direction and

goals are established, boards monitor the progress made toward those goals.

Likewise Ewell (2006) states:

Boards need to ensure that the institution's leaders are monitoring retention and graduation rates. They should ask administrators to discuss with them the institution's results and the implications (p. 26). [Boards need to] make reviewing evidence of academic quality and improvement a regular and expected board-level activity (p. xii).

The president has a responsibility to report academic quality and effectiveness to the board. However, board members should make the entire college accountable for student academic success. Therefore, it is critical for trustees to monitor the college's success in meeting the program needs expressed by stakeholders.

To monitor student success effectively, trustees have the responsibility to ask questions about academic quality and effectiveness of the institution. According to Ewell (2006):

Presidents are crucial in building a campus oriented toward student success. Boards, therefore, need to ensure that active efforts to retain and graduate students are near the top of the president's agenda (p. 30).

[Board members should] recognize that evidence about academic quality raises issues but rarely gives final answers. Boards should not just take them at face value, but should ask administrators what they think the data mean and what action implications grow out the findings (p. xii). Board

members need to stay focused on strategic issues. Strategic issues are “mission-critical” – that is, they are issues that if left unattended will threaten the institution’s ability to fulfill its purposes (p. xi).

Trustees may need administrators to interpret the data and to disaggregate it to examine it from multiple perspectives. Therefore, a data-driven institutional effectiveness program that includes benchmarks for assessing progress toward institutional goals can be the basis for a good monitoring system; the CEO and staff should design the program, based on the board’s priorities (Boggs, 2006, p. 8; Roueche et al., 1997, p. 12). Importantly, according to Ewell (2006):

The role of the board in academic quality assurance, as in any other area, needs to be defined in terms of explicit boundary conditions that guard against overstepping the line between necessary fiduciary responsibility for the institution and directly managing its operations (p. ix). Running the curriculum is the faculty’s responsibility; the board’s role is to remind them of that responsibility (p. x).

Finally, CEOs need to keep board members informed through regular reports regarding policy issues and policy implementation because departmental reports enable boards to monitor or gauge the degree to which the board’s previous directions on policy have been successful (Boggs, 2006, p. 8; B. N. McClenney, 1997a, p. 76).

Subsequently, through requests from board members for updates on the progress of student success initiatives and routine analysis of periodic reports by the college’s departments, trustees can effectively monitor student success.

Tracking Academic Progress

The key to meeting accountability standards is monitoring student data and adjusting academic programs through data informed decision-making. By these efforts, trustees are accountable for their decisions to the communities they serve and are responsible for the academic success of the college's students. However, success will be a challenge because community colleges are often referred to as "the Ellis Island of higher education" (Roueche & Baker, 1987, p. 3; Vaughan, 1983). For many community college students academic success is easier said than done as summarized by Dr. Kay McClenney (2004a):

Community colleges have inarguably the toughest job in American higher education. These are open-admissions institutions. They serve a disproportionately high numbers of poor students and students of color. Many of their students are the ones who were least well served by their previous public school education and therefore most likely to have academic challenges as well as fiscal ones. Community college students are three to four times more likely than students in four-year colleges to reflect factors that put them at risk of not completing their education...This is a reasonable description of the community college reality... It is a truth that provides important context for understanding institutional performance and accountability...The urgent priority for these institutions is to be involved in shaping accountability systems so that they are appropriate to community college missions and students.

Therefore, board members need to make data informed decisions in the best interest of students and they must rely on a culture of evidence by routinely monitoring student success interventions. Consistently monitoring and analyzing data of student academic outcomes assure trustees that CEO's are tracking student success as well. In Table 3, Ewell (2006, pp. 12-20) outlined questions for board members to ask the CEO when tracking the academic progress of students.

Table 3. Questions for board members: Tracking academic progress of students

1. Do we say what and how much students should learn? Where do we say it?
2. What kinds of evidence do we collect about learning?
3. Are we benchmarking performance against external standards?
4. Who is responsible for assessment, and how is it accomplished?
5. How do we use assessment results?

In addition, trustees need to ensure that all assessment results are used to make data-informed decisions regarding academic programs and student services. Therefore, colleges desiring “to be effective must first establish explicit goals and then devise ways to ascertain the extent to which those goals are achieved. Colleges thus may be guided in their efforts by two very basic questions: ‘What are we attempting to do?’ and ‘How do we know how well we are doing it?’” (McClenney & McClenney, 1988).

SUMMARY

Community colleges are important institutions that help to build communities and provide educational programs for citizens in the communities and regions they serve. These colleges have a long and unique rich history as an academic bridge between high school and four-year institutions. Hence, community college governance structures are also unique and serve unique roles.

Governing boards have authority and responsibility for their institutions; correspondingly, trustees seek to perform their jobs well by representing their community to the best of their ability. Through these time-consuming and challenging roles, individuals who become board members wish to give back to the community because most are interested in improving the lives of others in their region. For community colleges to succeed, trustees' abilities to manage and the willingness to talk openly to all stakeholders about student success are essential.

Policymaking is a central role of board members. Therefore, policies set by the board guide the decisions of college personnel to design and implement programs and student success interventions. In addition, monitoring student achievement is a critical responsibility of trustees to ensure the college is fulfilling its mission. Therefore, boards need to regularly request reports such as retention and graduation rates so timely student interventions can be implemented at the college.

Stakeholders today want colleges to be accountable for government funding and are seeking accountability for measures such as student persistence, retention, course completion rates, and graduation rates. Academic quality is the desired goal. Therefore, board members need to make data-informed decisions in the best interest of students and they need to routinely monitor student success interventions. Consistently monitoring and analyzing data of student academic outcomes can assure trustees that student success is a priority at the college.

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent community college trustees understand and monitor student success progress. In addition, this study sought to understand how board members alter their policymaking agenda to make student success a priority.

This study used qualitative and quantitative methods to collect data through interviews with college trustees, document review of board meeting minutes and a survey questionnaire, which provided data on student success efforts at each institution. The rationale for the study, research design, analysis of subjects, research instruments, data collection procedures, research setting, and analysis of qualitative data are presented in this chapter.

RATIONALE

This study used qualitative and quantitative methods: through interviews with board members, archival document review of board meeting minutes and a survey questionnaire to understand a trustee's decision-making behaviors and actions. Little is known about trustee's behaviors. Analysis using both qualitative and quantitative methods built a strong assessment. In addition, triangulation of interviews, archival document review and survey responses produced an integrated outcome.

The qualitative research method of grounded theory was selected because it is a strong research method used to increase our knowledge about how each of us interacts in society. According to Merriam (2002, p. 3), qualitative research explains the meaning

that is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. Ground theory is a suitable choice for studying college trustees due to the various roles and responsibilities each member has on the governing board.

Therefore, qualitative researchers are not interested in people's surface opinions as in survey research, or in cause and effect as in experimental research; rather, they want to know how people do things, and what meaning they give to their lives (Merriam, 2002, p. 19). By examining how each trustee understands and monitors student success practices at their institution, this study sought to explain how trustees interact through decision-making. It is critical to understand the methods and processes used by an institution's Board of Trustees to prioritize student success interventions. Hence, questions of meaning, understanding and process are appropriate for qualitative research (Merriam, 2002, p. 19). In this study, qualitative research methods revealed insight that would have been difficult or impossible to discover using quantitative methods.

In addition, there is limited research on the effect trustees' have on student success since most higher education literature has focused on trustee demographics and responsibilities rather than to examine trustee actions and behaviors. Therefore, it is important to understand the actions and behaviors of community college trustees since there is a gap in the research. According to Glaser (1992), qualitative research gives the intricate, most relevant and problematic details of phenomenon.

In addition to qualitative approaches, this study also used a survey questionnaire analyzed by quantitative method. Unlike qualitative research, which answers questions such as why and how, quantitative research examines questions such as how many, when

and where. While the data in quantitative research may be more efficient to gather and analyze, this method may miss contextual details explored in-depth in qualitative research. Therefore, both methods are used in this study because each method offers a different perspective through data analysis. Using a multi-method approach opens a wealth of information not accessible through the use of one analytical paradigm (Patton, 2002). Therefore, the use of quantitative and qualitative data provides a broader holistic picture than one or the other methods used independently.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Grounded Theory Research

Grounded theory was developed by a pair of American sociologists, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in the late 1960s as a reaction to the failure of quantitative sociology to capture humans actively engaged in shaping their environment (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory is a method of qualitative research used in various social science disciplines that seeks to build a theory by the researcher.

In terms of the relationship between the research question and research method, grounded theory starts from a very vague initial question and allows the theory to emerge from the data. Hence, grounded theory research emphasizes discovery with description and verification as secondary concerns (Merriam, 2002, p. 7). Therefore, this research method uses a set of procedures to develop an inductively grounded theory about a phenomenon. This approach is not about identifying and testing hypotheses. While deductive reasoning is commonly used in research, grounded theory uses inductive methods of interpreting data. Deductive reasoning starts with a question that guides the

study to reject or fail to reject a hypothesis. In contrast, inductive research begins without a hypothesis. Through the research process, information is gathered and questions are formed that draw out categories leading to patterns. Data gathered for a grounded theory study are analyzed via the constant comparative method of data analysis in order to derive conceptual elements of the theory (Merriam, 2002, p. 8). Uncovered patterns then form the theory which explains a phenomenon (Creswell, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Researchers in this mode build substantive theory which is localized, dealing with particular real-world situations (Merriam, 2002, p. 7).

Interpretative Case Study Research

Case studies are an in-depth study of a few people, events or organizations; it is an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community in a natural setting (Merriam, 2002, p. 8). Qualitative case studies, while interpretive, endeavor to present a holistic, in-depth description of the total system or case (Merriam, 2002, p. 38). According to Yin (1994), this research approach investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Utilizing a case study method for this research project provided an opportunity for the researcher to analyze student success interventions; explore how trustees are monitoring, observing and analyzing student success institutional data; and examine whether trustees' decision-making and policymaking agenda focused on student success.

According to Merriam (2002, p. 8), “a case study examines one particular program [a bounded system].” Single cases are used to confirm or challenge a theory, as well as to represent a unique or extreme case (Yin, 1994). In addition, according to Yin (1994), single-case studies are also ideal for discovery research studies where a researcher may have access to a phenomenon that was previously not available.

This study explored the data using an interpretivism analysis. Interpretivism research styles seek to gain an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events (Crotty, 2005). Using this style of analysis, this study sought to interpret and understand to what extent community college trustees understand and monitor student success progress at their institution. In addition, the study examined how Boards of Trustees alter their policymaking agenda to make student success a priority by routinely reviewing and analyzing briefings of student success interventions.

Stake (1995) and Yin (1994) identified at least six sources of evidence in case studies: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation and physical artifacts. Through triangulation of the data, each data source corroborated the evidence from the other sources and was useful for making inferences about events. For this research study, data was triangulated from questionnaire responses, interviews, and a review of board meeting minutes. Reviewing documents is an unobtrusive method of portraying the values and beliefs of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). By reviewing the documents, the study developed an understanding of decision-making and policy development of governing board members.

Interview Method

Kvale (1996) defines qualitative research methods, which includes interviews, as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations."

There are several reasons that interviews are appropriate for this study. First, the presence of an interviewer assured that the board member personally answered the questions and not employees from the college. Second, clarifications of questions were offered to trustees, if needed, during the interview. Finally, follow-up questions were used to clarify trustee responses.

Qualitative interviewing was appropriate for this study to capture and describe how board members understand and monitor student success interventions. In addition, interviews shed light on how board members developed their policy-making agenda. This method allowed the researcher to explore the individual differences and similarities of the trustee's experiences. The interview process also allowed the researcher to understand each trustee's thoughts about student success interventions. It was important in this study for trustees to describe what was important to them in their own words. The interviews were structured to make each trustee feel comfortable and candid in their responses. In addition, follow-up questions were used if trustees' responses were unclear or to verify that the meaning of the responses was accurate. As interesting or unexpected themes emerged from board members, the study explored these to some extent.

Interview techniques that were examined included informal, unstructured, semi-structured and structured. According to Kvale (1996) and Patton (1990), the researcher

does not use a predetermined set of questions for informal interviews, but rather develops questions as the conversation unfolds spontaneously. When using this method, the researcher may be required to recall the discussion to record the data. In unstructured interviews, the researcher allows the interview to proceed at the respondent's pace. As a result, subjects may vary by the interviewee's responses (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990). These approaches were not used in this study because trustees were asked to specifically address only student success interventions at their institutions, rather than discuss other roles and responsibilities. In contrast, structured interviews used predetermined questions, which were asked in a structured sequence, and the researcher gathered detailed information. This method is usually used when the researcher seeks a high level of consistency (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990). However, this method was not used because the researcher wished to explore in-depth trustee responses with follow up questions and discussion for clarification. The researcher also wanted to explore related themes as they emerged. Therefore, for this research study semi-structured interviews were used. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to follow an interview script or schedule while having the flexibility to explore in-depth trustee responses with follow up questions and discussion in order to explore related themes as they emerged (Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990).

Trustees were interviewed in a semi-structured open-ended style utilizing a list of core questions to collect data. Interview questions used for this study are listed in Appendix A and were designed around student success interventions and governing board policy agendas. One advantage of using interviews is that the researcher can elicit

a more in-depth response. Therefore, interviews provided an in-depth, detailed understanding of the trustee's experiences.

Survey Questionnaire

In addition to qualitative research methods, quantitative descriptive research was used in this study. Quantitative research methodology uses standardized procedures to collect numerical data in which statistical procedures are used to analyze and draw conclusions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2003). The survey design “provides a quantitative or numerical description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2003, p. 153). Questionnaires have advantages because of the consistency in the questions asked of each participant. For this study, survey questionnaires offered quantitative measurements based on a representative sample of trustees in the Texas Gulf Coast area. Survey research is a frequently used mode of observation in the social sciences and a strong research technique (Babbie, 1998). Survey research may be used to explore an area of interest when investigations of the event have not been previously studied (Martella et al., 1999).

DESCRIPTION OF SUBJECTS

The participants in this study were Board of Trustee officers from four Texas Gulf Coast community colleges. Trustee officers were the focus of the study because they set the agenda of governing board meetings and preside over all board meetings. Community college trustees in Texas are elected to the Board of Trustees from the community; the number of trustees elected is dependent on the governance structure of the college. Consequently, the researcher felt that newly elected board members or board

members with limited experience would not offer the same breadth of knowledge that a seasoned officer trustee would afford to this research.

SELECTION OF SUBJECTS

Trustee officers from Texas Gulf Coast community colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream initiative were selected to participate in the study. Texas Gulf Coast colleges selected for this study were: Brazosport College, Lee College, San Jacinto College and The Victoria College.

INSTRUMENT

Board Meeting Minutes

Board meeting minutes served to corroborate student success interventions from other data collection sources, and was useful for making inferences about events. For this research study, board meeting minutes were examined from colleges located exclusively among the Texas Gulf Coast area.

Interviews

Unlike quantitative research methods, in qualitative research the interviewer is the instrument (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Therefore, as the instrument, data collection was dependent on the researcher's stamina, character traits and interviewing skill.

Inventory

An inventory developed for the 2007 Achieving the Dream Board of Trustee Institute entitled *Selected Items From The Community College Inventory: Focus On Student Persistence, Learning and Attainment [CCI]* was used in the study.

The inventory provides descriptions of eleven characteristics of colleges and universities that are strongly focused on student success – that is student persistence, learning and attainment. Related to each characteristic is a set of indicators that more fully describe observable institutional practices. The inventory is intended not as a test and not as a checklist, but rather as a tool for prompting institutional review, reflection, discussion – and, ultimately action at improvement (K. M. McClenney & McClenney, 2003).

The level and scope of institutional effort and accomplishment with regard to these characteristics and indicators was rated in terms of the following response scale: “no implementation”, “under discussion”, “marginal implementation”, “partial implementation”, and “full implementation” (K. M. McClenney & McClenney, 2003). A copy of the inventory is included in Appendix B. The questionnaire is divided into eight sections comprised of 11 characteristics as shown in Table 4 (McClenney & McClenney, 2003).

Table 4. Selected items from the Community College Inventory: Focus on student persistence, learning and attainment (CCI) sections and characteristics

Section	Characteristics
Part 1. Vision, values and culture	1. Institution-wide commitment to promoting student persistence, learning and attainment and to equity in educational outcomes for all students
Part 2. The culture of evidence	2. Institutional and individual reflection and action typically prompted and supported by data about student persistence, student learning and institutional performance
Part 3. Strategic focus, planning and resource allocation	3. Fully integrated processes for institutional evaluation, planning and resource allocation
Part 4. Student learning	4. Clearly defined outcomes for student learning 5. Systematic assessment and documentation of student learning 6. Student participation in a diverse array of engaging learning experiences that are aligned with required outcomes and designed in accord with “good educational practice” 7. Effective developmental / remedial education, tutoring and other appropriate support for learners who are under-prepared for college-level work
Part 5. Student and academic support services	8. A planned array of student and academic support services, designed in accord with evidence-based best practices for optimal impact on student persistence, learning and attainment
Part 6. The people of the college	9. Emphasis on student persistence, learning and attainment in processes for recruitment, hiring orientation, deployment, evaluation, and development of personnel
Part 7. Leadership for learning	10. Leadership behavior consistently reflects the focus on student persistence, learning and attainment as well as equity in student outcomes
Part 8. Institutional policy	11. Key institutional policies promoting focus on and accountability for student persistence, learning and attainment

SETTING

For each type of data collection, different settings were used. Prichard and Trowler (2003) indicated that qualitative methods were appropriate in situations where the researcher can view the world through the lenses of the participants. Therefore, board meeting minutes were examined and interviews were conducted at the trustee's institution or in their offices so that participants did not have additional travel. Also, trustees completed the Community College Inventory [CCI] questionnaire in whatever setting they chose and then returned the questionnaire by mail.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Informed Consent Form

Trustee officers in the Texas Gulf Coast area participating in Achieving the Dream were contacted to participate in the study. After indication of interest, an Informed Consent form, in Appendix C, was mailed to all trustee participants prior to beginning our first session for their review and signature. Trustees participating were informed that information collected in connection with the study that could be identified with them would remain confidential. Hence, each trustee's name, the community college's name and other identifying information were concealed.

Board Meeting Minutes

For this study, board meeting minutes were gathered and analyzed. The board meeting minutes from each college were collected from August 2006 – May 2008. Reviewing documents during this period enabled the analysis of minutes eight months prior to trustees attending the 2007 Board of Trustee Institute on March 28-30, 2007

through May 2008, which is two months after trustees attended the 2008 Board of Trustee Institute in March 27-29, 2008 hosted by Achieving the Dream. In all, twenty-two months of board meeting minutes were examined from each college beginning in the fall semester of 2006 through the spring semester of 2008.

Board minutes were examined to learn how trustees monitor interventions and to gather information regarding policymaking focused on student success. The study examined board minutes for patterns of student success policymaking and decisions prioritizing student success by the governing boards.

Interviews

Interviews were scheduled with each board chair at participating colleges. At the first session, I explained the nature and purpose of the study. During the session, trustees were interviewed using a semi-structured open-ended style utilizing a list of core questions, which are listed in Appendix A. Interviewees were allowed to proceed at their own conversational pace and each trustee was interviewed individually and separately. Each interview was taped while the researcher recorded responses in written notes. Code was used to mark tapes and written notes. These will be retained in a secure place for future analysis if needed.

Inventory

The inventory was mailed to trustees prior to the interview and was returned by mail once board members recorded responses. Each survey package included the Informed Consent form, a survey questionnaire and a stamped addressed return envelope.

ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Board Meeting Minutes

Board meeting minutes were examined for policy patterns and decision-making related to student success. In addition, documents were examined to determine to what extent board members receive briefings of student success progress from college departments. Board meeting documents revealed information regarding how boards prioritize student success at their institution. Text was sorted into emergent themes and assigned categories. The main themes emerging from the data were identified and coded. Categories were refined into major and minor groups, which were analyzed by comparing and contrasting patterns of responses.

Interviews

Data from trustee interviews were recorded using written notes and audiotapes. The data was analyzed to answer each specific aim of the study. Each taped interview was transcribed and key passages were highlighted. The frequency of various key words and thoughts revealed many similarities in patterns of responses. Text was sorted into emergent themes and categories were assigned to passages. Main themes emerged from the data, which were identified and coded. Categories were refined into major and minor groups, which were analyzed by comparing and contrasting patterns of responses.

Inventory

The inventory developed for the 2007 Achieving the Dream Board of Trustee Institute entitled *Selected Items From The Community College Inventory: Focus On Student Persistence, Learning and Attainment [CCI]* was examined using descriptive

statistics. Similarities and differences in the patterns of responses by trustees were examined according to subject area. Descriptive statistics were used to determine if trustees tended to answer similar questions with similar answers. The questionnaire was divided into eight sections comprised of 11 characteristics.

SUMMARY

This chapter explained the methodology used to examine to what extent community college trustees understand and monitor student success progress. In addition, the methodology used sought to understand how board members alter their policymaking agenda to make student success a priority by routinely reviewing and analyzing briefings of student success interventions from college personnel. An overview of the qualitative and quantitative methodology has been stated in addition to descriptions of the research design used for the study.

RESULTS

Little is known regarding how governing boards reach their decisions. The results of this study were obtained using qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection through interviews with board members, archival document review of board meeting minutes and a survey questionnaire designed to illuminate how governing board members make decisions. Utilizing both research methods for this study constructed a strong analysis because of the triangulation of interview, archival document review, and survey responses to produce an integrated outcome.

A qualitative research method of grounded theory was employed because it is a strong research process that increases our knowledge about how each of us interacts in our environment. According to Merriam (2002, p. 3), qualitative research explains how individuals socially construct meaning through their interaction with the world. Ground theory was selected for this study because of the various roles and responsibilities each trustee has in representing their community. In Texas, governing board members are elected and can either represent sections of the community or the community as a whole. In addition to maintaining communication with industry leaders and the community at large, trustees have a responsibility to interact with college administration, faculty members, staff members, and students.

Qualitative interviewing captured how governing board members understand and monitor student success interventions as well as how they develop their policy-making agenda. The research looked at differences and similarities of each governing board member's experiences, as well as to each trustee's thoughts about student success

interventions. This study describes what issues are significant to trustees in their own words. Also, the interviews were structured to make trustees feel comfortable to express their thoughts. For confidentiality purposes, colleges are referred to anonymously throughout the results and governing board members in the study are referred to as *board member* or *trustee*.

Board members were interviewed using a semi-structured, open-ended style with a list of core questions (Appendix A) to collect data. Interview questions were designed around student success interventions and governing board policymaking agendas. Using interviews for the research gave an in-depth, detailed understanding of each trustee's experiences.

GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS CHARACTERISTICS

Board chairs from Texas Gulf Coast community colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream initiatives were selected to participate in the study. The colleges selected for this study were: Brazosport College, Lee College, San Jacinto College and The Victoria College.

Demographic information was gathered from each trustee and compared to previous research on board member characteristics. Because of the small sample size in this study, it is uncertain how the characteristics of the trustees in the Gulf Coast region compare to the national population of trustees serving colleges today. However, the comparison does provide information regarding the characteristics of trustees currently serving in the Gulf Coast region to past characteristics of board members nationwide.

In this research study, half of the trustees interviewed were women, which indicates a considerable increase from 33% serving nationally in 1997 (Smith, 2000). All of the trustees interviewed were board Chairs with work experience from the business and industry sector. Two trustees owned and managed local newspapers and the remaining trustees were retired; one board member was a retired employee from a chemical company and the other trustee was a retired business owner. Because three of the four trustees owned their own business, this indicates a noteworthy increase in business ownership for trustees today in comparison to 17% of trustees who owned businesses in 1997 (Smith, 2000).

On average, the trustees in this study had served 19 years on their college's governing board. By comparison this is a tremendous increase from the 8.7 years of service averaged by trustees nationally in 1997 (Smith, 2000). The shortest term served by a board member in this study was 13 years; the longest term served was 24 years.

In Texas, all community college governing board members are elected. However, half of the trustees interviewed were initially appointed to the Board of Governors in order to replace a board member who had resigned prior to the expiration of his or her term in office. At election time, these appointed trustees ran for office as incumbents and were then elected to the board. Trustees not initially appointed to the board stated they decided to run for election after being approached by members of their community to address concerns about the college's governance.

DATA ANALYSIS

In combination with interviews and questionnaires, board meeting minutes were used to help make inferences about each trustee's actions and behaviors from their perspective of their role and responsibility on the board to effect student success. Data from trustee interviews was recorded using written notes and audiotapes to encapsulate the trustees' experiences through their own language.

Board meeting minutes were examined to determine to what extent Boards of Trustees receive and utilize briefings of student success interventions. Likewise, board minutes revealed how boards altered their policymaking with regard to student success. Key passages were highlighted and the frequencies of various key word patterns and policy development patterns were noted to uncover similarities in the data. The text was then sorted into emergent themes and assigned categories. The main themes emerging from the data were identified and coded.

The research also utilized an inventory developed for the 2007 Achieving the Dream Board of Trustee Institute entitled *Selected Items From The Community College Inventory: Focus On Student Persistence, Learning and Attainment [CCI]* to examine similarities and differences in the patterns of responses by trustees according to subject area using descriptive statistics to determine if trustees tended to answer similar questions with similar answers. The questionnaire consisted of eight sections comprising 11 characteristics. Trustees responses on the questionnaire are used to fully describe observable institutional practices and was used as a tool for reflection and discussion (McClenney & McClenney, 2003).

RESEARCH QUESTION ONE DATA ANALYSIS

The first research question examined to what extent community college governing boards use mechanisms to understand or monitor student success. Data analysis found that trustee decision-making was affected by both internal and external mechanisms. Internal mechanisms were influences or data effecting decisions provided from within the college from administration, faculty members and staff members. External mechanisms were influences and information gathered from outside the college that affected decision-making from sources such as business, industry and other community stakeholders.

Internal Mechanisms

All board members reported continuous communication with college personnel to obtain guidance and advice on policy and governance decisions as an internal mechanisms effecting decision-making. Monitoring reports from the college's departments regarding student and academic support services, student learning outcomes and assessments, as well as reports of learning processes through engaging learning experiences and support for learners, were found to effect trustees decision-making on the board. Good communication among board members and college personnel as well as in-depth analysis and reporting of student achievement were a result of human resource practices focused on enhancing student success.

Communication with College Personnel

All of the trustees described a collaborative relationship with their college CEO regarding student success concerns and initiatives. Governing board members explained that communication with college administration was important to working as a team and

to keeping “the whole board in the loop.” Board chairs in the study stated they had more contact with college CEO’s because together as a team the CEO and board chair plan and set the agenda for board meetings:

The president and I get to talk a lot more than some of the other board members. We have a lot of communication... to determine what we need to talk about at the board meeting. There is quite a lot of collaboration that goes on between the president and myself. We get into discussions about student interventions...or any issue we think may be appropriate.

In addition to monthly meetings, board chairs and CEO’s plan yearly governing board workshops to discuss progress and plan strategies for the college. As one trustee explained, “the workshop is the instrument by which we tell the president -- here’s what we need to be working on for the year and here’s what your goals ought to be and your plan ought to be.” Notably, communication with administrators becomes critical and necessary as challenges arise:

If there was a problem, probably he would discuss it with all of us. A meeting has to be scheduled and set up. However, if the timing wasn’t right, then he and I certainly do visit on those things. He and I have a good relationship and we do communicate very well.

Many times board members have initiatives that they want the administration to implement at the college. In the end however, it is the college president in collaboration with the faculty and staff members who iron out the details of any student success initiatives. As one trustees explained:

We [the board] can serve as the sounding board and advisory board to him [the CEO], but he has to pretty much establish it. He's the one responsible for the success of it," explained one trustee. "Board members get their "direction from presidents. You have to hire a good president and then they need to be the leader.

In preparation for planning board meeting agendas with the CEO, one trustee explained that as thoughts and ideas are formed:

I have 3x5 cards at my desk, so anytime I think of something - a question or whatever - when we meet, I make sure I have that card in my pocket and we go over the list. The president keeps a list also. We really don't set times to do this. We just let two to three things stack up and then we meet to talk about it.

Therefore, prior to board meetings, trustees arranged for thoughtful planning, thorough consideration and communication of student success issues to discuss with CEOs.

Trustees responded to questions on the CCI questionnaire regarding whether leadership behavior at their institutions consistently reflected a focus on student persistence, learning, and attainment, as well as equity in student outcomes (McClenney & McClenney, 2003). When asked if "institutional leaders demonstrate a commitment to strengthening student persistence, learning and attainment – a commitment that extends beyond rhetoric to actions in resource allocation, policymaking and data-driven decision making," all board members stated the practice was in full implementation by the

college's leadership team. In addition, all trustees replied that CEO and other institutional leaders' frequently use data about student persistence and learning to drive decisions at all the colleges.

Human Resource Management

Dialogue on student success throughout all levels of the college, including the governing board, starts with hiring personnel who have good communication skills. The communication mechanisms by which student success initiatives are discussed center on the relationship that exists between trustees and college personnel. In Table 5, trustees were asked on the CCI questionnaire whether the college's leadership emphasized "student persistence, learning, and attainment in processes for recruitment, hiring, orientation, deployment, evaluation and development of personnel" (McClenney & McClenney, 2003).

Table 5. The People of the College

Emphasis on student persistence, learning, and attainment in processes for recruitment, hiring, orientation, deployment, evaluation and development of personnel.	Marginal implementation	Partial implementation	Full implementation
The roles of faculty, staff, and administration are defined in terms of the functions and behavior that contribute to student success.		50%	50%
Staffing patterns and workload arrangements reflect a focus on student persistence, learning and attainment.		50%	50%
Employment practices reflect high value placed on diversity.		25%	75%
Personnel recruitment, selection and orientation processes explicitly reflect the focus on student persistence, learning and attainment.		50%	50%
Systematic evaluation of teaching effectiveness includes evaluation by both peers and students.		25%	75%
At all levels of the institution, personnel evaluation criteria and processes reflect a focus on activities and behaviors that contribute to student learning – and promote learning by the person being evaluated.		75%	25%
Reward systems recognize and reward outstanding contributions to improving student persistence, learning and attainment and creating more effective learning environments.	25%	50%	25%
Faculty and staff development opportunities are focused on improvement of student persistence, learning and attainment and informed by the results of student and institutional assessments.		75%	25%
Percentage of responses per column	3.1%	50%	46.9%

When asked if personnel roles at the college were defined in terms of functions and behaviors that contribute to student success, half of the trustees' reported partial implementation and half noted full implementation of the practice. Similarly, when asked if staff patterns and workload arrangements reflected a focus on student persistence, learning and attainment, half of the trustees replied the practice was partially implemented and half replied the practice was fully implemented at the college. Seventy-five percent of the trustees reported full implementation that employment practices reflected a high value on diversity. When asked if personnel recruitment, selection and orientation processes explicitly reflected the focus of student persistence, learning and attainment, half of the trustees reported partial implementation and half reported full implementation. Seventy-five percent of the trustees cited full implementation of systematic evaluation of teaching effectiveness including evaluation by both peers and students at their colleges. Partial implementation was noted by seventy-five percent of the trustees that at all levels of the institution, personnel evaluation criteria and processes reflected a focus on activities and behaviors that contributed to student learning and promoted learning by the person being evaluated. However, responses to college reward systems recognizing and rewarding outstanding contributions to improving student persistence, learning and attainment and creating more effective learning environments ranged from marginal (25%) and partial implementation (50%) to full implementation (25%). Seventy-five percent of the trustees reported only partial implementation of faculty and staff development opportunities, which are focused on improvement of student persistence, learning and attainment and informed by the results of student and

institutional assessments. Overall, on the “People of the College” survey items, trustees were closely divided between partial (50%) and full implementation (46.9%) of practices at their colleges. Only 3.1% of the responses indicated marginal implementation of practices.

Student and Academic Support Services

Student and academic support services are essential for community college students who are typically first generation college students with multiple at-risk characteristics for non-completion of their academic goals. For most students, their initial contact with the college is through the student and academic support service department. Because of their responsibilities for counseling students in key areas such as completing their college application and financial aid forms to course advising and registration, personnel in the student and academic support service departments serve on the front line and are critical to a student’s initial enrollment success.

Trustees responded that “a planned array of student and academic support services, designed in accord with evidence-based best practices for optimal impact on student persistence, learning and attainment” were partially to fully implemented at the college’s they served as shown in Table 6 (McClenney & McClenney, 2003). These indicators are powerful mechanisms needed at community colleges to aid students and track student data.

Table 6. Student and Academic Support Services

A planned array of student and academic support services, designed in accord with evidence-based best practices for optimal impact on student persistence, learning and attainment.	Partial Implementation	Full Implementation
All college processes (financial aid application, registration, etc.) are student-friendly.	50%	50%
A strong and systematic advising system ensures that each student develops an academic plan.	50%	50%
The advising process stresses steps toward degree attainment.	75%	25%
The institution employs informational and instructional technology in ways specifically targeted to improve student persistence, learning and attainment.	100%	
Fundraising efforts are focused on providing financial aid to low-income students	25%	75%
Strong partnerships with K-12 systems ease the transition for high school graduates coming to the institution.	50%	50%
Strong articulation agreements with senior colleges promote smooth transfer without inappropriate loss of credit for community college students	25%	75%
Percentage of responses per column	53.5%	46.5%

Half of the trustees reported partial implementation of all college processes that are student friendly and half reported full implementation of the processes. Also, half of the trustees responded that there was a strong and systematic advising system to ensure that each student develops an academic plan and half reported full implementation of an advising system. Seventy-five percent of the trustees noted partial implementation of an advising process that stresses steps toward degree completion. All of the trustees responded that informational and instructional technology methods to improve student

persistence, learning, and attainment were only partially implemented at the institutions they served. Seventy-five percent of the trustees noted full implementation of fundraising efforts to provide financial aid to low-income students. Half of the trustees responded that strong partnerships with K-12 systems that eased the transition for high school graduates coming to the institution was partially implemented and half reported full implementation of a strong partnership. Seventy-five percent of the trustees reported strong articulation agreements with senior colleges to promote a smooth transfer for students without inappropriate loss of credit earned at the community college. Overall, on student and academic support services survey items the trustees were evenly divided between partial (53.5%) and full implementation (46.5%) of the practices.

Student Learning: Monitoring Learning Outcomes

Monitoring student learning is an essential step as it enables college leadership to track student progress towards achievement goals. One mechanism to understanding and monitoring student success is through a review of clearly defined outcomes for student learning in academic departments of the college. According to board members, learning outcomes were outlined in the institution's accreditation assessments and reports formulated from quality enhancement committees or outcomes assessment committees, which summarized student learning outcomes for review by trustees and administration. Similarly, learning outcomes were found in the academic division's strategies within the overall institutional strategic plan.

Understanding and monitoring clearly defined student learning outcomes make it possible for board members to formulate data based policy decisions. In Table 7, trustees noted the implementation of learning outcomes as reported by their institution.

Table 7. Student Learning: Learning Outcomes.

Clearly defined outcomes for student learning	Marginal implementation	Partial implementation	Full implementation
The institution has clearly defined required student learning outcomes for core abilities / general education (degree level).		50%	50%
The institution has clearly defined required student learning outcomes for each program / major area.		25%	75%
The institution has clearly defined required student learning outcomes for each course.		25%	75%
Statements of required learning outcomes are prominently and publicly displayed and communicated.	25%		75%
Statements of required learning outcomes are congruent with the mission and values of the institution.		50%	50%
Percentage of responses per column	5%	30%	65%

Half of the trustees reported marginal implementation of clearly defined required student learning outcomes for core abilities / general education practices and half reported full implementation. Seventy-five percent of the trustees reported full implementation of clearly defined required student learning outcomes for program areas. Also, seventy-five percent of trustees reported full implementation of clearly defined required student

learning outcomes for each course. In addition, seventy-five percent of the board members observed full implementation of statements noting required learning outcomes prominently and publicly displayed and communicated, while one board member reported only marginal implementation of the practice. Half of the trustees reported partial implementation of statements noting required learning outcomes that are congruent with the mission and values of the institution and half reported full implementation of the practice. Overall results of the learning outcome survey items found that 65% of the responses reported full implementation of initiatives, 30% of the responses reported partial implementation, and only 5% of the responses reported marginal implementation of the practice.

Student Learning: Learning Assessment

Trustees also monitored learning assessments designed and developed by faculty members as another mechanism to understand and monitor student success initiatives. Board members reported monitoring learning assessments from the college's institutional strategic plan and annual review. In Table 8, trustees reported the outcomes for learning assessments at their institution.

Table 8. Student Learning: Learning Assessment.

Systematic assessment and documentation of student learning.	Marginal implementation	Partial implementation	Full implementation
Faculty members have designed and /or identified and implemented an array of appropriate assessments of student learning in all credit courses.	25%	25%	50%
Faculty members have designed and /or identified and implemented an array of appropriate assessments of student learning in the program/major area.		75%	25%
Faculty members have designed and /or identified and implemented an array of appropriate assessments of student learning in core abilities/general education.		75%	25%
Faculty members have developed common criteria or rubrics that are used in ascertaining and documenting each student's level of attainment of required learning outcomes.	25%	50%	25%
Percentage of responses per column	12.5%	56.25%	31.25%

Mixed results were reported for faculty designed and / or implemented assessments of student learning in all credit courses at the college ranging from marginal (25%), partial (25%) to full implementation (50%). Seventy-five percent of board members reported partial implementation of faculty members designing and / or identifying and implementing an array of appropriate assessments of student learning in the program /

major area. Likewise, seventy-five percent of board members reported partial implementation of faculty members designing and / or identifying and implementing an array of appropriate assessments of student learning in core abilities / general education. Mixed results were also reported for faculty-developed criteria or rubrics to ascertain and document a student's level of attainment of required learning outcomes ranging from marginal (25%), partial (50%), to full implementation (25%). Overall results of the learning assessment survey items found that trustees reported marginal (12.5%), partial (56.25%) and full implementation (31.25%) of initiatives at the college.

Student Learning: Learning Process Through Engaging Learning Experiences

Diverse and engaging learning experiences are another important learning outcome for students. Board members and administrators reported that these practices were monitored through the college's strategic plan. In Table 9, trustees reported outcomes for learning processes focused on student participation in a diverse array of engaging learning experiences that are aligned with required outcomes and designed in accord with "good educational practices" at their institution.

Table 9. Learning Outcomes: Learning Process Through Engaging Learning Experiences.

Student participation in diverse array of engaging learning experiences that are aligned with required outcomes and designed in accord with “good educational practices”.	Marginal implementation	Partial implementation	Full implementation
Faculty members clearly articulate learning outcomes at different levels of the curriculum; consequently, prerequisites are clear and rational, and sequential levels are appropriately aligned with one another.	25%	25%	50%
The institution has built partnerships with employers and community-based organizations leading to hands-on experiential learning experiences for students.			100%
Students typically participate in opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., service learning, internships, cooperative learning).	25%	50%	25%
Course requirements are purposefully designed to promote out-of-classroom learning experiences for students (e.g., group projects, faculty conferences, related community service, etc.)		75%	25%
Faculty members routinely identify high-failure-rate courses and undertake collaborative re-design of those courses to promote student success while maintaining high quality standards.	25%	50%	25%
The institution has developed curricula with explicit career pathways that feature articulation with secondary school programs.		50%	50%
The institution has developed curricula with explicit career pathways that feature strong links between basic skills / ESL / developmental courses and college-level courses.		75%	25%
The institution has developed curricula with explicit career pathways that feature certificate programs providing the first step to the A.A.S. degree.		50%	50%

Table 9. (continued) Learning Outcomes: Learning Process Through Engaging Learning Experiences.

Student participation in diverse array of engaging learning experiences that are aligned with required outcomes and designed in accord with “good educational practices”.	Marginal implementation	Partial implementation	Full implementation
The institution has developed curricula with explicit career pathways that feature articulation with related baccalaureate programs.		25%	75%
Expectations regarding students’ responsibilities in the learning process are explicitly stated and are communicated to all students by faculty, counselors and fellow students.		25%	75%
Percentage of responses per column	7.5%	42.5%	50%

Mixed results were reported for faculty members learning outcomes at different levels of the curriculum ranging from marginal (25%), partial (25%) to full implementation (50%). All trustees reported full implementation of the college’s partnerships with employers and community-based organizations leading to hands-on experiential learning experiences for students. Results were mixed ranging from marginal (25%), partial (50%) to full implementation (25%) for experiential learning opportunities and faculty members identification of high-failure-rate courses to undertake collaborative re-design of those courses to promote student success. Seventy-five percent of trustees reported partial implementation of course requirements designed to promote out-of-classroom learning experiences for students. Mixed results were reported for faculty members who routinely identified high-failure-rate courses and undertake collaborative redesign of those courses to promote student success while maintaining high quality standards ranging from marginal (25%), partial (50%) to full implementation (25%). Half of the

board members reported partial implementation of developed curricula with explicit career pathways that feature articulation with secondary school programs and half reported full implementation. Seventy-five percent of board members reported partial implementation of curricula with explicit career pathways that feature strong links between basic skills / ESL / developmental courses and college-level courses. Half of the trustees noted partial implementation of developed curricula with explicit career pathways that feature certificate programs providing the first step to the A.A.S. degree and half reported full implementation. Seventy-five percent of trustees reported full implementation of curricula with explicit career pathways that feature articulation with related baccalaureate programs. Correspondingly, seventy-five percent of trustees reported expectations regarding students' responsibilities in the learning process are stated and communicated to all students by faculty, counselors, and fellow students. Overall, the results of the learning process survey items focused on student participation in a diverse array of engaging learning experiences that are aligned with required outcomes and designed in accord with "good educational practices" found that trustees reported marginal (7.5%), partial (42.5%) and full implementation (50%) of initiatives at the college.

Student Learning: Learning Process Through Support Services for Learners

In Table 10, trustees reported outcomes for learning processes focused on effective development / remedial education, tutoring and other appropriate support services for learners who are under-prepared for college-level work at their institution.

Table 10. Student Learning: Learning Processes Through Support Services of Learners

Effective development / remedial education, tutoring and other appropriate support services for learners who are under-prepared for college-level work.	Partial implementation	Full implementation
The institution conducts thorough reviews of current programs for underprepared students to determine student success rates and identify needs for improvement.		100%
Mandatory assessment and course placement policies have been implemented for entering students.	25%	75%
Exit competencies for developmental education and ESL courses are fully aligned with competencies required for success in entry-level college courses.	25%	75%
Faculty who teach developmental courses do so voluntarily and have undergone training in appropriate teaching strategies.	50%	50%
Percentage of responses per column	25%	75%

All trustees reported full implementation of institutional reviews of current programs for under-prepared students to determine student success rates and to identify needs for improvement. Seventy-five percent of trustees reported full implementation of mandatory assessment and course placement policies that were implemented for entering students. In addition, seventy-five percent reported full implementation of exit competencies for developmental education and ESL courses that are fully aligned with competencies required for success in entry-level college courses. Half of board members reported partial implementation of practices that noted faculty members who teach developmental courses do so voluntarily and have undergone training in appropriate teaching strategies and half that reported full implementation. Overall results of the learning process survey items focused on effective development / remedial education,

tutoring and other appropriate support services for learners who are under-prepared for college-level work found that trustees reported partial (25%) and full implementation (75%) of practices at the college.

External Mechanisms

External mechanisms were also found to influence board member decisions. Due to declining state budget support for colleges, board members explained that partnerships within the community influenced their decisions about programs and capital projects. Board members also reported influence from various stakeholders and constituents using public opinion information from sources such as community meetings, face-to-face contacts with citizens, or surveys, to guide their decision-making on student success issues.

Community Partnerships

Partnerships have become necessary for community colleges in the wake of declining state support for institutions. Therefore, trustees reported that educational institutions have begun to partner with one another to share common resources. As one board member explained:

Factors like the University of Houston and their utilization of our buildings and space are going to motivate us. If the University of Houston were to decide to move out of the space to somewhere else in town, we're left with those buildings. That is a major factor to consider. They also fund half of our library...[and] we share the personnel in the library. We would really look at what this would do to us financially.

Likewise, relationships with business and industry are more commonplace for community colleges, and these partnerships are having an effect on board decisions. For one college, a newly formed relationship with a petrochemical company new to the community was affecting board decisions. “We were already talking to them about training and this will be a huge factor to motivate” governing board decisions. Likewise, a partnership with a medical facility in the college’s service area was critical to securing funding for faculty salaries:

The medical facility here is one of our partners. They said, “I know you didn’t have it in your budget, so we are going to pay for the first several months of a nursing faculty member’s salary”. So, they helped meet the need we had in funding the job position.

Partnerships allow colleges to explore opportunities to enhance their student success initiatives. One trustee explained how he was motivated by opportunities presented to the college through community partnerships:

There are a lot of opportunities. You need to look at everything that jumps out of the bush, if you can. [Don’t] if you know it’s a waste of time. But look at opportunities. You have to look at a lot you don’t do, so that you’ll know it when you find one. If you don’t poke your head out there, you don’t know whether it is an opportunity or not. So, pay attention.

One board member noted the importance of remaining true to the purpose of the institution while exploring partnerships that lead to developing new programs and projects. All board members interviewed agreed, “the biggest single factor is student

success,” and they were clear that student success was the most important factor motivating their decisions. As one board member explained:

We have a mission statement that we’ve worked on. Prior to having a workshop to do strategic planning and goal setting, we review the mission statement. Everybody keeps it in mind and says, “Okay, everything we are going to discuss and agree on today needs to fit our mission statement and what we are trying to do at the workshop.” At the end of the workshop, we review our mission statement again and say, “now all the things we approved for new initiatives and goals need to be tied to our mission statement.” We agree yes or no. We look at what we’ve decided and we agree [whether] it fits the mission statement and then we proceed. We need to look at that to make sure the decisions we make don’t hurt the accessibility of the students to our college, that we keep our taxes low and that we are going to be competitive with the other Gulf Coast colleges in the area.

The board member continued to explain the importance of using the mission statement to make board decisions:

We have it [the mission statement] for every meeting. At our workshop we review the statement at the beginning and the end. On our [board meeting] agenda, we decided we needed to have it printed on the top of the agenda. When you review the agenda, you can review the mission

statement and know what we are all about. The college mission statement is used by governing board members to guide decisions at the college.

Stakeholder Political Considerations

Political considerations were also found to be a factor in decision-making for board members and were found to influence decisions about student success initiatives. State funding is critical to public institutions, particularly when a college is looking to initiate a new program. Therefore, funding for new initiatives and programs can be influenced by political considerations as reported by one board member:

Personally, only if it had to do with getting more money from Austin [State capital], considering the impact of Austin -- particularly, if we think we could do something that would help us in an initiative that we know they [legislators] are thinking of in a positive way. [However], I would never make a decision just for that reason. It would have to be a win-win. I think we would try to use political consideration to help us with student success, such as getting support for a special program particularly in a vocational area and we do get support from industry partners.

Business and industry partnerships also have political influence into board member decisions as one board member noted:

We consider the fact that we have industry partners... [and] we try to treat them all the same and give them the same courtesy. That kind of political correctness is used. We have to do that kind of stuff. Before we go and increase the taxes, like on the bond issue, we have to go to [our industry

partners]. If you look at our industrial partners they pay 50% - 60% of the taxes of the college. So, we make sure we let them know what's going on and make sure that we support their needs. So, when we ask [for more taxes] they say, "Yeah, go ahead, we support it." We [the college] had a big ad in the paper from industry saying that they are supporting our bond issue.

As politicians, elected board members also respected the political considerations of the voters they represent. As one trustee explained, board members "are sort of a watchdog and we reinforce with our constituents that we are working for them". Regarding reelection, one board member commented, "if you work real hard to do what you are supposed to do, it will take care of itself." Board members were also sensitive to the needs of the communities they represent and one trustee commented that, "a lot of people [trustees on the board] are looking for the minority vote". Therefore, trustees at one college were building a facility in an area of the community with a high number of minority constituents.

Board members and college administrators also sought input from the citizens in the community regarding their educational needs and sought input from minority community members regarding programs to offer at the new facility. One board member expressed:

The president and I went to the community to get ideas from the people about the types of programs they would like to have in their community at the new facility. We didn't have a platform to go from, because we didn't

have any ideas about what they would be interested in. We wanted to get ideas from them. I have to try and help people. It is a nice thing to have had a part in a lot of kids' lives. There are some really, really good kids there in the community.

Trustees also stated that they responded to political considerations in their working relationship with other board members. Board chairs noted the importance of having a good relationship with other board members in order to influence and gain consensus on decisions approved by the whole governing body:

We have all this [student] data. There are probably only two or three of us that really understands it. So, my mission is to connect the dots the best that I can. I think when they see the connection of the dots and realize; then they'll be willing to fund it [student success initiatives]. The president is going to initiate it, but they'll be willing to go ahead with it. There will not be anyone dragging their feet. We'll get enough people to support it. We should not have any problems budgeting the money to make it work. It's pretty simple. I've picked out what I need to do and if I can be successful [gaining board member support], it will add to the success of what we are doing.

Another board member noted:

You come to the best conclusion for the college, for the students and then you settle on it. When you talk about being political, that means that a decision is being made not on the basis of fact. I believe you make your

decisions based on facts and use the facts to sell it. Some people don't like to do that. That's the way I operate though.

Board members, however, did not let political considerations influence decisions that pulled them away from the mission of the college or the college's focus on student success. While board members were respectful and sensitive in considering the views of different stakeholder groups, they most importantly relied on data to use as a guide and to provide reasons for their final decisions on the governing board.

Collecting Public Opinion Data

Trustees also discussed the influence of public opinion in motivating board decisions and the methods in which they collected public opinion data. Trustees gathered most of their information for capital projects through formal polling. Decisions to enhance or expand business and industry programs were finalized using formal surveys and advisory councils. Surveys were typically used to gather opinions from students; however, informal data collection methods were used to compile public opinions from constituents throughout the community at clubs such as Rotary Club, Kiwanis, or Lions Club. One trustee described the types of feedback they received from the community:

The president tries to have members of the administration involved in all those organizations. As a matter of fact, one of our Deans is the president of the Chamber of Commerce and we have some faculty members who are members of Rotary Club. The president makes presentations at those organizations. We made presentations with our master plan and what the needs were for the bond issue. [We explained] how much money we are

going to raise and how much the taxes would go up. We had public meetings and got feedback. So, that when people went to vote, they knew what they were voting for. As a board, you do talk about the feedback you get.

Therefore, board members bring back the information they have gathered from the community to the whole board and then discuss the public opinion feedback as a governing body when considering decisions for approval.

Informal Data Collection

Board members also collect informal data from the community. One trustee who lived in a community of approximately 70,000 residents explained:

It is not formalized, but in a community the size of [ours] you get feedback. In a community our size with the news coverage and things we write about on campus, the blogs and things, it comes in. People will write their opinions online and show them to board members in the community.

Another trustee who lived in a community with approximately 145,000 residents agreed that board members collect opinion data:

At the ballgame and at the grocery store. I'll be here at my office and a guy comes in. So, I give them the name of the president, and tell them, "You talked to me, now go talk to them." I get more [opinions] because I'm here at the paper.

A third trustee who lived in a community of approximately 65,000 residents agreed:

We get feedback in informal ways. We know if people were unhappy in the community through our connections. I have contact with everyday people. It's been good for me. I think it is more informal, being in the community and seeing what's happening, just the people that you bump into in the sphere that you travel in most. I always pitch out "what do you think about this". So, you listen to neighbors, at church, community groups like Kiwanis, Rotary Club, and Lions Club, etc. I have a natural setting working in a store... When you are in the public eye like that and people can come in and see you and talk to you, you can pass on what you agree or disagree about. It gives you an opportunity to know what people are thinking; to know what their ideas are and the different things that they are thinking about.

Through his business ownership the board member was asked to serve on other community boards. Subsequently, through his service on other boards in the community, he was able to gather public opinion data to share with fellow board members.

Formal Data Collection

In addition to informal polling for public opinion data, board members used formal polling methods for capital projects, student opinions and to understand the program needs of business and industry. One trustee explained the importance of gathering information directly from students:

We are going to begin polling to determine why we lose students. Now we have in the past done some polling before enrollment to try and encourage people to register and attend classes. But we are going to do polling to find out why we lose students...to see what we need to fix...[and to know] why do we lose these students?

The trustee explained that she had worked with the college's administration to determine the best time to capture the data in the enrollment process in hopes of using it for decision-making. Through the discussion about the project, she explained that administration wanted to capture data right after enrollment. She recounted that she asked, "Why try in September to locate those kids that we have sitting in the chairs now? Why not work with them now or do both?" Therefore at this college, it was clear that trustees and administration were working together and discussing options to determine the types of data that was needed and the methods to use to collect the data to use for Board member decision-making.

Formal polling was also used by all of the trustees for decisions regarding capital projects:

For our bond elections we have had polls only because they are worried that it wouldn't pass. For the bond election it is formal polling. We hired a firm that met with groups throughout our area. They used our master plan and each group decided what was important. Certain areas and groups throughout the process thought that technology was important and other groups thought the medical building was a priority. [We needed] to

get a feeling for what is important to them. We did get all kinds of information from the community.

The board member explained that the board debated and discussed why the money was needed and the amount of money needed to complete the project based on the input from the community:

It was discussed at the board meeting and it was decided that, yes, we would go through with the bond issue. We discussed what the people wanted and then we made a decision whether to go for part of it or all of it.

In addition, formal surveys and advisory councils were used to collect opinion data from multiple sources. According to one board member:

We do survey industry partners because they pay a majority of our tax money and we do most of their training. They use to have their own training departments. Now they come to us for training. So, we do survey them and work with them and help to determine what the course content or course structure should be for certain courses that they require. We survey our citizens for continuing education courses and those kinds of things to see what their needs are and what we need to develop. We survey our students as to what their needs are and what would make it easier for them to attend college.

Public Opinion Influence

Trustees, therefore, were found to use public opinion data to make decisions on the board. At one college:

Based on surveys, we built a child care facility for our students. This is good because it allows the students to come and leave their child while they are attending class. But it also serves as a laboratory or class for some of our students who are studying childcare. We have a priority - students first; if there's room, then the faculty and then the public [can use the facility]. But so far most of the time students have filled the available slots.

However, one trustee disagreed with the notion that public opinion influenced board decisions regarding student success at their college:

As far as public opinion having to do with student success, I don't think that occurs very much... I think the college influences more public opinion regarding student success than public opinion influences the college. We are a little different. I can tell you it hasn't because I believe the college is more controlling of the opinion of the public than the public's opinion is controlling the college, because people look to us to be the leader in that [student success] field.

Another board member stated that the college shapes public opinion of the institution through its communication to the community. "Board members, faculty and everybody surrounding the college... have to be out to spread the word". Board members viewed themselves as partners with professional educators in communicating college initiatives to the community. Trustees spoke about sharing information with community leaders at civic clubs and shared "reports from college departments through the Chamber of

Commerce. The state of the college is given then and afterwards there is a media report”.

Another board member emphasized:

Board members need to be a spokesman for the college. I like people to ask questions about the college and I like board members to know enough about the college so that when people ask them about it they can answer questions.

Similarly, another board member stated:

The Chairman speaks for the board to the press. I speak for the board after the board has spoken to me. You can't just go out there and “ace” them up. You need to be sure that the message you give is what the board really would like you to say. Sometimes you do get caught [unprepared]. But if you know your board, then you really know what to say without having to speak to them. Some people who have never been a board chair think that it is very prestigious. I think it is a heck of a responsibility. I have often told people, I do believe in board chair rotation. It's a passion for me. A passion no one else understands, where we've been, where we are going, in the way that I do.

Some board members felt strongly that the college influenced public opinion; they also felt that changing community circumstances, such as changing demographics within their service area, influenced their decisions regarding student success. One trustee explained:

We are smart enough to look out there and see how the demographics are changing, so we change. But it hasn't been because of public input. Changes within our demographics have influenced what we are doing on student success. The board has taken note of that change without the public pointing it out. For example, we advertise in Spanish newspapers and on Spanish radio stations. We didn't do that 15 years ago. The college administrators have seen and know how things have changed, so it's not the public opinion that's influenced us, it's the community and the community changes that are influencing our decisions. The public doesn't have to influence us because we are ahead of them.

RESEARCH QUESTION TWO DATA ANALYSIS

The second research question examined to what extent governing boards review or analyze briefings of student success interventions. Data analysis found that all trustees reviewed and analyzed student data briefings on a monthly basis. Also, trustees and administration used the data in developing the college's strategic plan and to address critical issues.

Frequency of Data Review

Board members were asked in interviews if they reviewed student outcome data, such as recruitment, retention, course completion rates or graduation data. One trustee responded that their board usually reviews enrollment and graduation data:

Twice a year at the end of each fall and spring semester. They look at how many graduates are reported at the end of each semester and

enrollment data. Then in the spring we compare our data with other colleges our size to look at retention, graduation rates and enrollment. We are always looking at enrollment. We look at it to see if we're growing or not. If we're not, then are we *not* doing something we need to be doing? We all tend to keep doing the things we are use to doing, but it may not be right.

All trustees remarked that they reviewed student data monthly at board meetings. As one trustee recounted:

We have it [student data] on the agenda almost every meeting. It is a brief discussion. I do think that as a board member, you really expect people to have read the agenda and all the accompanying material so that when they get to the board meeting, they can have some short questions about it. We shouldn't have a lengthy discussion. If they have any questions about it and they do quite often, they should call the president. She gets some discussion quite a bit.

Another trustee added:

We look at our enrollment numbers on a monthly basis during our Information, Reports and Agendas meeting item. We also have a quarterly report based on retention, course completion and graduation/certificate programs and we've looked at it for several years. Our analysis in the past has been to look at the statistics and the numbers and compare ourselves to the other colleges. We don't just get ours, we get what the

other Gulf Coast colleges are doing. We get to compare [our college] to the rest of them. What we did was look at our numbers to see if we are doing as well as the other colleges or if we're doing a little better.

In interviews, board members were asked if they analyzed student outcome data and to what extent was student outcome data used, if at all, to make decisions or policies.

One board member responded:

I don't think we should necessarily analyze it. If you tell me to analyze, you give me raw data and I analyze what it means, that really is the job of the chancellor and those under him, to give us the data and tell us what it means. Now you better be honest with us, okay. Don't let us catch you fudging. You shouldn't tell us you have an 18% graduation rate when it is a 14% graduation rate. You know, come on, be honest with us. But I don't expect them to give us a pile of data and say here you can analyze it. We should have the conclusion. We as a board need to ask for the data, but not in a form where we are analyzing it, but to where we are evaluating the analysis. At least that's my opinion and the opinion of the rest of our board.

Another board member stated:

We've been looking at numbers for a good while. My responsibility next is to get the board members to connect the dots so that they are on board, then we can move forward. This [student success] is not going to be easy to solve.

The trustee noted that board member responsibilities are time consuming but tracking student progress is an important role:

All the people on the board are busy with other professional lives. But you really have to begin somewhere; then you move through the steps. We didn't have the manpower to track students like we are now. But one of the things we started a few years ago was to track our students to the four-year institutions. We found out that in most cases they only dropped 1/10 of a grade point. So, that was good. That meant that we [the college] had prepared them for what they needed to do.

The trustee also pointed to a significant rate of drop-outs. "We have never spent the resources and the time to find out why they dropped out," he said, "so now we are going to do better tracking."

Board members, therefore, reported using student success data for decision-making and planned to use more data in the future for strategic planning. In addition, board members stated that they were in the early stages of determining the types of policies to approve that would enhance student success at their institutions. One board member reported:

Up to now we're starting to do that. But we are determined to go through our policies, just like they talked about in Santa Fe [at the Achieving the Dream Board of Trustee Institute] and to see that our policies and everything is directed [to student success]. We do, but not to the extent we're *going* to do it. That is one of our goals going forward.

Board members are also looking at student data critically. A board member recounted:

Now we are saying, ‘Well, we are doing as well as the other colleges, but we’re still not satisfied with what we’re doing. We need to try and make it better and do a better job for our students and our community. We are looking at what are we going to do about it [student success] to improve and what are we going to measure and how are we going to do it.

Attending the Achieving the Dream Board of Trustees Institute proved to be “quite an eye opener,” a trustee indicated:

Since we came back, we gave a presentation to the rest of the board members on what had happened, and I think we got everyone excited about what we needed to do. The administration was already working on it and getting the data, identifying the cohorts that we were going to measure and trying to determine what they need to do, where we are failing, where we are doing well, and those kinds of things. You know it’s a program in progress. I think we’re into it and pretty well determined to go through with it and are committed to it.

Another trustee remarked:

What’s happen since the beginning of the Achieving the Dream [initiative] is, it has taught us, it has taught *me* anyway, to look at some of the reports and to not just say, “Yeah we’re doing okay”, but to look at it deeper and say, “Well, we’re doing okay but why are we at 80% and not 95%”. I think Achieving the Dream

kind of started a revolution of people, board members anyway, looking at [data and saying] we're doing okay but what can we do better.

Institutional Strategic Plan Approval

In interviews, board members were asked if they considered student success in strategic planning. A board member responded, "Yes, that guides us from the plans in the past". Board members work with administrators to develop the plans. A second board member responded:

Most of the ideas come from the professionals at the college. They go to conferences and we offer a lot of sabbaticals. People go off, then come back with a lot of ideas. The ideas are then filtered through the president, then to the board. Board members come back with ideas and so all those things sort of get filtered and some get thrown out. But you may get one good idea that *is* a help [through the process]. We have embraced a lot of ideas that come from all quarters and I think that's good. The President and the staff work through the strategic planning process and bring recommendations to the board for approval. We really believe in shared governance. When a board member kicks in an idea, they do it at a retreat or an orientation. The last thing you want is a board member, during a board meeting, introducing something that hadn't been worked through the staff and faculty. You need to have faculty buy-into things. If you don't have them on board, it is not going to work. I think that sort of thing just evolves.

Another board member reported:

We're on the peripheral. Again, strategic planning comes from the experts, but the fact that we have let people know student success is our priority, the declaration that our board totally accepts the direction we need to go, that influences the strategic plan.

Board members use the college's strategic plan throughout the year and revisit the plan as needed.

We meet at the beginning of the year and establish a five year plan. We say, here's what we are going to do, here's what our goals and milestones are going to be. Then, half way through the year we get a report back from the administration that says here's where we are at on the goals and plans that we have. [For example], we are doing well on these, some things have changed, we need to negotiate either timing or budget on these two or three that are based on what we knew. So, we have a mid-year review on those. We either renegotiate budgets or renegotiate timing and then we get the full report on our goals. Every year we have a certain number of initiatives that we're going to do. Some of them take more than a year to complete. We keep looking at those on a yearly basis until they are complete.

Trustees were asked for their responses regarding a fully integrated process for institutional evaluation and planning. The results are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Strategic Focus, Planning and Resource Allocation.

Responses regarding a fully integrated process for institutional evaluation and planning.	Marginal implementation	Partial implementation	Full implementation
The institution has a strategic plan that clearly and succinctly states its goals for future development.			100%
The strategic plan is used to guide operational planning for each fiscal year.			100%
Strategic focus is created through the identification of a small number of clear priorities for institutional action.		25%	75%
The institution demonstrates its ability to stop doing things that are off-mission, low priority, and /or ineffective in promoting student persistence, learning and attainment.	25%	25%	50%
The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform plans for improvement in programs and services.	25%	50%	25%
Members of the campus community participate extensively in planning and priority-setting processes.		25%	75%
Resources are consistently allocated and re-allocated to address priorities identified through the planning process.		50%	50%
Percentage of responses per column	7.2%	25%	67.8%

All board members responded that colleges had fully implemented an institutional strategic plan that clearly and succinctly stated its goals for future development. In addition, all board members responded that a strategic plan was used to guide operational planning for each fiscal year. Seventy-five percent of the board members reported that the college had a strategic focus created through the identification of a small number of clear priorities for institutional action. Mixed results were reported ranging from marginal (25%) to full implementation (50%) for the colleges ability to stop doing things that are off-mission, low priority, and /or ineffective in promoting student persistence, learning and attainment. Mixed results were also reported ranging from marginal (25%) to full implementation (25%) for utilizing student and institutional assessments routinely to inform plans for improvement in programs and services. Seventy-five percent of board members reported that the campus community participated extensively in planning and priority-setting processes. Half of the board members reported marginal implementation of allocated and re-allocated college resources to address priorities identified through the planning process and half reported full implementation. Overall, results of board member responses regarding a fully integrated process for institutional evaluation and planning reported 7.2% marginal responses, 25% partial responses and 67.8% full implementation of the practice.

Addressing Critical Issues

Board members were asked to discuss how they prioritize critical issues as they arise and how these issues have affected student success interventions at the college.

Board members explained that because state funding is tied to enrollment numbers, they monitor enrollment data closely each semester:

If enrollment went down, we would prioritize it to the top and find out why it was happening. It would become an agenda item. A critical issue would be discussed in a committee meeting several times.

The college's committee meetings are open meetings and the public is invited to attend.

A board member stated that:

We would then make recommendations. Board meetings are really pretty cut and dry. We work out a lot of things in committee meetings. There is seldom a surprise at the board meetings.

In addition, board members stated that it is critical for them to know how the enrollment at their colleges compares to other colleges in the region:

We compare what other community colleges are doing so that we are not out of line with other colleges similar to ours. The numbers of students in our remedial courses are monitored. We are always looking at our numbers. The developmental education programs can be expensive.

When dealing with critical issues, board members unanimously agreed that they address each issue as it becomes known to the governing body. One board member summarized:

We take them as they come. I don't know that we prioritize the critical issues. I would say that we address critical issues as they become known.

If you have three critical issues all at the same time, you are going to address them all at the same time.

However, trustees stated that no matter what issues come along, the priority is always student success. As one responded:

I would say as the culture of the board is leaning towards prioritizing student success. It is beginning to play a role in our decision-making. We didn't do it in the past, but we are now. That is the direction we are going. It started a year ago when we were in Santa Fe.

One board member explained that many times a strategic plan is altered because of a critical issue:

Again, it's a dynamic plan and things do change...legislative changes, community education problem, or whatever. The president is able to come to the board whenever necessary and say, "Here's part or one of our goals in the strategic plan - things have changed. We can't go forth with what we had, we're going to revise it this way. One of our plans at a campus was to make sure that we had faculty from the University of Houston come to our college to teach classes. We have been working on that agreement from the University of Houston for quite a while. We still haven't managed to get some people here, but it's still an ongoing process to make sure we get the right things in place. If that doesn't happen, then we just keep moving it [the goal] over depending on what is needed or if

something new comes up. They [the administration] can go to the board and say, “here’s an important issue that needs work”, and we’ll do it.

RESEARCH QUESTION THREE DATA ANALYSIS

The final research question examined how, if at all, do governing boards alter or prioritize their student success policymaking agenda. Data analysis found that board members changed their policymaking agenda by first addressing the climate and culture of the college. Through cultural changes at the colleges, policies and programs have developed. Board members also discussed how they tied their policy agenda to the college’s budget so that resources are provided for success of the programs. Changes at the colleges were reflected in the governing board meeting minutes.

Climate and Culture

In interviews, board members were asked if they thought the board established a climate or culture for the college. One board member answered:

They’re all very supportive of education. They want to make sure our college is accessible to all students in the community and all adults in the community. That’s why we try to keep our tuition and fees reasonable. We compare ourselves to the other Gulf Coast colleges as far as tuition is concerned. We also try to keep our local taxes as low as possible. Our citizens know this. Our community is small, so we talk to a lot of the citizens all the time.

Trustees stated that having strong leadership at the top of the organization was important to establishing a climate and culture for the college. A governing board whose

members work together well are more likely to attract an outstanding president to lead the college than a board whose members do not work well together. “If you do not have a good functioning board, you will not attract a good leader in a president”, remarked one trustee. In addition, a good working relationship between the board and the college’s administration was also noted as important. According to one trustee: “The board, along with the president, we establish it [the climate and culture of the college].”

Board members described the culture of the colleges they serve as one that is focused on student success and supportive of community needs. “If we establish a climate or a culture, it is one of supporting education, making the college accessible to the community and having good fiduciary responsibilities.” Another trustee agreed:

We’re there for the students and we think the faculty should exist for the students. The students are our customers and all we do should be based on what their needs are and to serve the community.

Trustees agreed that they were dedicated to the mission of the colleges and serving the community through education. According to one trustee:

I know our board members are very dedicated. They don’t have any political agendas. They are just there because they love the college and they want to do what is right for the community.

Board members reported that they are experiencing changes in the culture of their college as a result of their work with Achieving the Dream. One board member recalled:

When we came back here a year ago from Santa Fe, we gave a little speech focusing on how we had never talked before about student success

and that was changing. That is what we are here for and that's what the focus is going to be on. Our decisions are going to be based on that and that's where this college is going. I will tell you that our stating that publicly, at the board meeting, helped set the culture and climate for the new direction of the college. We didn't do this alone, we did this with the support of the chancellor. We left no doubt the chancellor supported Achieving the Dream and we supported it. Together we are going to move forward toward student achievement and student success. You don't set climate and culture by yourself, but you set it with the chancellor and we have. But *ours* made a much greater impact, than if the Chancellor had (stated it alone). If they think they can get around the chancellor, you know talk to a couple board members, they will. But when we set climate and culture as a board priority, believe me that sets it. We're going to do that again at our next board meeting with the new group of board members that were in Santa Fe. We will reaffirm [student success] is here, this is what we're here for. At the next board meeting, we will reinforce this is what we are all about.

Another trustee agreed:

Because of Achieving the Dream and our exposure to Achieving the Dream, the board has let the whole community know we are here for one purpose, and that is student success. Everything else is secondary.

However, board members explained that a college's leadership should not try to change a culture at an institution too quickly. One trustee shared the following story:

We had a president with lots of ideas. [He'd] come with 50, you know.

This person reminded me of someone who'd just bought a truck load of canaries - and doesn't own a cage.

Therefore, board members agreed that gradual change at an institution is a better approach. As one board member agreed, "You can't develop a culture instantly. But we definitely are trying and it is filtering down to all the levels". When asked how the board member knew the new cultural initiative was filtering down to all levels of the college, the trustee responded:

I go to meetings. When we first started, people were griping and complaining. They didn't want to do this. They didn't have time and they have done a 180-degree turn around. Now, they are excited about this stuff. I have witnessed this and it has been fantastic.

As board members explained, the relationship between board members and the CEO is important to establishing the culture of the institution:

We have a board today that totally supports the chancellor, but at the same time realizes that first they [the Board] represent the taxpayer and the students. If something seems in conflict with what the chancellor is telling us, we will discuss and debate this with the chancellor. With his help and guidance and with our input, we decide what's best for him and the taxpayers and the students.

However, some trustees described how there are conflicts at times between board members. Occasionally, a board member's motive in running for the board has little to do with student success or enhancing the college. They explained that people have many diverse reasons to run for the Board of Governors:

I think, almost every board - bank board, credit union board, parks board, and every other kind of board I've been involved in - if you can get 2/3 of the people working, really functioning, you're lucky. That's about as good as it's going to get. Some board members don't have a clue what they are doing, ever, and they aren't ever going to get it. I don't care if they serve 50 years, they are just never going to get it. So you are functioning with that.

Some board members expressed their concern regarding board member relationships and described the challenges of working with fellow board members to gain consensus on agenda items. As one trustee explained:

Trust me there are people who are not qualified to serve on a board, they really shouldn't be there, they're not there for the right reasons and there are a myriad of reasons why people want to do that. The real reason surfaces after a very short period of time.

In addition, board members describe the challenges they face when working with fellow board members to select items for the meeting agenda or to determine how meetings will be conducted. As one board member explained:

I have had some difficulty with some board members. It's not a free-for-all. If it's not on the agenda, we're not going to talk about it [during the

meeting] and we're not going to put something on the agenda just before it's posted. I don't care what they want to put on the agenda. Just give it to the president 30 days before you want it on the agenda, so that she has time to prepare that agenda item. If it is not on the agenda, it's out, respectfully, and we move on. You just expect that of people.

Trustees also talked about sharing leadership roles among all board members, to the extent possible, in order to enable members to fill leadership roles on the board:

People have to step up into leadership roles to make it happen and that needs to be shared, if it can. Most good chairs try to include everybody and try to get the most out of people. You try to share the committees so people buy into it.

However, one trustee explained that some board members are hesitant to support student success initiatives at their college:

We have about 1/3 of the board really against almost anything we try to do. We try not to shove it down their throats, but when it comes down to it, we [majority of the board] say do it.

Board members also examined the vision, values and culture of their college in Table 12. Trustee's noted their college's institution-wide commitment to promoting student persistence, learning and attainment and to equity in education outcomes for all students.

Table 12. Vision, Values and Culture

Institution-wide commitment to promoting student persistence, learning and attainment and to equity in educational outcomes for all students.	Partial implementation	Full implementation
The institution has clearly defined its mission, values and vision, with a central emphasis on student persistence, learning and attainment.		100%
A shared sense of the mission, values and vision is held by individuals and groups across the college community	50%	50%
The institution has made an explicit, public commitment to achieve equity in educational persistence and attainment across all student groups.	25%	75%
The college community consistently enacts the high value placed on diversity and cultural competence among students, faculty, staff, administrators and governing board members.	50%	50%
In pursuit of its mission, the institution has developed a strong culture of evidence	75%	25%
The institution promotes and supports broad engagement of the college/university community in processes for planning and priority-setting.	25%	75%
The institution promotes and supports broad engagement of the broader community in processes for planning and priority setting.	50%	50%
Individuals and groups within the institution demonstrate a collective sense of responsibility for student persistence, learning and attainment.	50%	50%
Percentage of responses per column	40.6%	59.4%

All of the trustees reported that the institution had clearly defined its mission, values and vision, with a central emphasis on student persistence, learning and attainment. Half of the trustees reported partially implementing a shared sense of mission, values and vision held by individuals and groups across the college community. Seventy-five percent of

board members stated that the college had made an explicit, public commitment to achieve equity in educational persistence and attainment across all student groups. Half of the trustees reported the college community consistently enacts the high value placed on diversity and cultural competence among students, faculty, staff, administrators and governing board members. Seventy-five percent of trustees reported partially implementing a strong culture of evidence in pursuit of the college's institutional mission. Seventy-five percent of board members noted that the college promotes and supports broad engagement of the college/university community in processes for planning and priority setting. Half of the board members stated partially implementing broad engagement of the broader community in processes for planning and priority setting. In addition, half of the board members reported partially implementing a collective sense of responsibility for student persistence, learning and attainment among individuals and groups within the institution. Overall, most (59.4%) of the responses noted full implementation of a commitment to promoting student persistence, learning and attainment and to equity in educational outcomes for all students.

Responses in Table 13 examined the culture of evidence at each of the colleges. Board members reported whether institutional as well as individual reflection and action typically were prompted and supported by data about student persistence, student learning and institutional performance.

Table 13. Culture of Evidence.

	Implementation				
	None	Under discussion	Marginal	Partial	Full
Institutional and individual reflection and action typically prompted and supported by data about student persistence, student learning and institutional performance.					
Institutional research and information systems provide systematic, timely, useful and user-friendly information about student persistence, learning and attainment.				75%	25%
The institutional culture promotes willingness of governing board members, administrators, faculty, staff and students to rigorously examine and openly discuss institutional performance regarding student persistence.				25%	75%
The institutional culture promotes willingness of governing board members, administrators, faculty, staff and students to rigorously examine and openly discuss institutional performance regarding student learning.				25%	75%
The institutional culture promotes willingness of governing board members, administrators, faculty, staff and students to rigorously examine and openly discuss institutional performance regarding student attainment (certificates, degrees, transfer).				25%	75%
The institution is committed to cohort tracking of entering students to determine rates of attainment and to identify areas for improvement.					100%
The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to the successful completion of remedial/developmental courses.				25%	75%
The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to developmental students' success in entry-level college courses.				25%	75%

Table 13. (continued) Culture of Evidence.

The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to successful completion of selected gatekeeper courses.				25%	75%
The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to the rate of successful course completion of all courses (C or better).			25%	25%	50%
The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to student persistence – re-enrollment from one term to the next.			25%	25%	50%
The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to completion of certificate and associates degrees.			25%	25%	50%
Data depicting student persistence, learning, and attainment are routinely disaggregated and reported by student characteristics – gender.				25%	75%
Data depicting student persistence, learning, and attainment are routinely disaggregated and reported by student characteristics – race / ethnicity.		25%		25%	50%
Data depicting student persistence, learning, and attainment are routinely disaggregated and reported by student characteristics – income level.	25%		25%	25%	25%
The institution regularly assesses its performance and progress in implementing educational practices which evidence shows will contribute to higher levels of student persistence and learning.				50%	50%
The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform institutional decisions regarding strategic priorities.				25%	75%
The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform institutional decisions regarding resource allocation.				25%	75%
The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform institutional decisions regarding faculty and staff development.				50%	50%
The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform institutional decisions regarding improvements in programs and services for learners.				25%	75%
Percentage of responses per column	1.4%	1.4%	5.2%	28.9%	63.1%

Seventy-five percent of board members reported partial implementation of institutional research and information systems that provided systematic, timely, useful and user-friendly information about student persistence, learning and attainment. Seventy-five percent of trustees reported that the college promotes a willingness of governing board members, administrators, faculty, staff and students to rigorously examine and openly discuss institutional performance regarding student persistence and student learning. Correspondingly, seventy-five percent of trustees reported the colleges had fully implemented an institutional culture that promotes a willingness of governing board members, administrator, faculty, staff and students to rigorously examine and openly discuss institutional performance regarding student attainment [certificates, degrees, transfer]. All trustees reported colleges were committed to cohort tracking of entering students to determine rates of attainment and to identify areas for improvement. Seventy-five percent of board members stated there was full implementation that the college regularly collects, analyzes and reports data pertaining to the successful completion of remedial / developmental courses as well as developmental students' success in entry-level college courses. In addition, seventy-five percent of trustees reported that colleges reviewed data pertaining to successful completion of gatekeeper courses. Half of the board members reported that colleges review data pertaining to the rate of successful course completion of all courses with a [C or better]; 25% of trustees reported partial implementation and 25% of trustee reported marginal implementation. Likewise, half of the trustees reported that colleges analyze data pertaining to student persistence – re-enrollment from one term to the next; 25% of trustees reported partial implementation

and 25% of trustees reported marginal implementation. Half of the trustees also reported the college analyzes reports pertaining to course completion of certificate and associates degrees; 25% of trustees reported partial implementation and 25% of trustees reported marginal implementation. Seventy-five percent of board members examined data depicting student persistence, learning and attainment that is routinely disaggregated and reported by gender characteristics. Half of the board members reported reviewing data disaggregated by race and ethnicity; 25% of trustees reported partial implementation and 25% of trustees reported that the data was under discussion. For data reported by income level, 25% of trustees reported full implementation, 25% of trustees reported partial implementation, 25% of trustees reported marginal implementation and 25% of trustees reported no implementation of this practice. Half of the board members reported regular assessment of performance and progress in implementing educational practices, which contribute to higher levels of student persistence and learning; half of board members reported partial implementation. Seventy-five percent of board members stated colleges routinely used the results of student and institutional assessments to inform institutional decisions regarding strategic priorities. Seventy-five percent of board members reported full implementation of results of student and institutional assessments that routinely informed institutional decisions regarding resource allocation. Half of board members routinely used the results of student and institutional assessments to inform institutional decisions regarding faculty and staff development. Seventy-five percent routinely used data to inform decisions regarding improvements in programs and services for students. Overall, most of the board member's responses (63.1%) reported full implementation that

boards make decisions prompted and supported by data about student persistence, student learning and institutional performance.

Policy Development

The first step to developing policies is to identify priorities for student success goals. Board members were asked if they thought the board had a responsibility or role to identify student success priorities. One trustee stated:

I want to be aware of [student] success because we are ultimately as responsible for it as we are fiscally for the college's success. But we are not educators. We do get reports that we have to approve and we do analyze outcome data on retention and course completion rates.

In addition, trustees agreed, "as a nation, we are in trouble. Personally, I want everyone to be successful." Board members were concerned about national data and statistics that indicated the U.S. is lagging behind other nations academically. As one board member described, "we have swung down into this trough, as I'll refer to it and we have to get out of it". All, board members interviewed were committed to focusing on student success at their colleges in order to improve each student's chance of reaching their academic goals.

Accordingly, board members felt that the board needed to lead the way to developing policies for student success initiatives:

We believe the priorities of the board become the priorities of the administration. Eventually the administration will decide, 'Hey, that's what the board wants, that's what we need to work on.' The discussion usually leads the administration to go and do those things, whether the

board is initiating the discussion or whether the board is supporting the priorities of the administration. I think that gives a direction to the administration that these are priorities we need to have and certainly student success is one of our biggest priorities. We have indicated that in our strategic intents and our goals for the next four to five years.

Another trustee agreed, saying:

I think the board should demand student success, then get out of the way while the chancellor and those under the chancellor determine how that success is defined. We don't tell him how to do it, we don't tell him what day to do it, we don't tell him what classes to do it in. We let him know, this is the goal of your job and your job depends on this. Your job depends on student success. We need to tell him, "Hey this is what we want". He needs to help [the board] define what *that* is. We can't say we need to be at 16% next year. That's not our job. It's up to them [college administration] to determine it, then the board to support them and see that they have what's necessary to make students successful. If they [the college administration] don't do it, then it is up to us to find somebody that will. That's our job. Not to tell them how to do it, but just to tell them what the goal is because we can't micromanage.

Board members were also asked if they thought the board had a responsibility or role to establish student success policies. One board member's response was:

I know we have the responsibility and, yes, we need to. I don't know exactly where it fits in with policies. I don't have enough feedback from other board members to move on that. I'm working with them to connect the dots.

Most board members expressed the view that it is the responsibility of college personnel to establish student success policies and then present the policies to the board for approval. One board member described the process followed at one institution:

Again, our board and I agree that is the job of the chancellor, to establish it [student success policies]. We want to make sure it exists, but I don't think the role of the board is to establish and determine what success is. We're not the educators. We should be informed, but we should not be sitting down and saying "we want every student to do [blank]." If we have a policy that raises flags, then we will have a detailed discussion and come to a good conclusion. Ours is not to rubber stamp. It's also not to get in the way of them [college personnel] doing their job. We need to demand accountability.

Another trustee remarked:

My role as a board member is to make a note to the administration what is important - the fact that student success is a priority for us and that we want to see the data. In the future, we want to see that we are succeeding in course completion and graduation rates. As a board, we need to be sure that student success is a priority, making this program part of our yearly

goals and then hold the administration, especially the president responsible for achieving the result we intend to have. But, to say we as a board want to start this policy, I'm not so sure that this is the intent of the board, rather to show that it is a priority *to* us. We need to work on it and initiate a program and plan. [Then] come to the board and say "here's what we are going to do and here's the result we intend to get." Then it is up to the board to make sure that it happens.

A third trustee explained that:

Data is used a lot to make policy, but not by the board. The president and the deans are using it for their decision-making and recommendations on policy, which we then approve. So, every time that they bring back a policy or a change in a policy, it is backed by data, it convinces us that they have made the right decision. Right now that is how the process works. We do not have a very good president if it doesn't work.

Another board member clarified the policy making process:

This is an administrative function and the administration works out the details. Then they bring the decisions to the board, because nobody on our board is an educator. Most board members are business people. We don't develop a policy. We just set the criteria that we will have student success and we let the rest of them [college personnel] develop the policies for the governing board to approve.

Board members were also asked if any student success policies had been introduced and implemented at the college they represent since participating in the Achieving the Dream initiative. One board member reported:

The President signs on to these things and we've allowed her to spend her time and the energy of others to work on the project and eventually it will come to a policy form. I'm not sure I know what we could adopt. I don't want to adopt a policy that we can't carry on. I would rather work and get it where it needs to be and then approve a policy. I would really rather wait until we have a real sense of direction.

Another trustee explained:

We instituted a quality enhancement program based on accreditation needs. Since then, we have established a Director of Quality Enhancement and she establishes new classes to help students in remediation. Those are new programs that have been instituted to try to keep our retention high. We are going to begin gathering data to determine how they are doing. The whole board is committed to this initiative and very, very supportive. They are not policies, but programs that have been implemented. The administration and the board are behind them and they've been part of our strategic plan and goals for the last two to three years.

On the CCI questionnaire, board members were asked if key institutional policies promoted focused on and are accountable for student persistence, learning and attainment. Board members responses are noted in Table 14.

Table 14. Institutional Policy

Key institutional policies focus on and accountability for student persistence, learning and attainment.	No implementation	Partial implementation	Full implementation
Key institutional documents reflect the focus on student success			100%
Academic policies reflect priority placed on student persistence, learning and attainment			100%
The governing board has established an explicit policy that calls for closing the gap in educational attainment between low-income students and students of color in comparison with their peers.	25%	25%	50%
The governing board regularly examines key performance indicators of student persistence, learning and attainment.			100%
The governing board supports resource allocation and re-allocation to promote improvement in student persistence, learning and attainment.			100%
Percentage of responses per column	6.25%	6.25%	87.5%

All trustees reported that key institutional documents reflected the focus of student success. Likewise, all the board members reported that academic policies reflected a priority on student persistence, learning and attainment. Half of the board members reported that governing boards had established an explicit policy that called for closing the gap in educational attainment between low-income students and students of color in comparison with their peers. All trustees stated that the governing board regularly examines key performance indicators of student persistence, learning and attainment. In addition, all board members noted that governing board members supported resource allocation and re-allocation to promote improvements in student persistence, learning and attainment. Overall, most board members (87.5%) reported full implementation of key institutional policies focused on accountability for student persistence, learning and attainment; 6.25% of board members reported partial implementation and 6.25% of board members reported marginal implementation.

Board Meeting Minutes

For each college, board meeting minutes were gathered and analyzed. The board meeting minutes were examined from August 2006 – May 2008. Reviewing documents during this period enabled analysis of the minutes eight months prior to trustees attending the 2007 Board of Trustee Institute on March 28-30, 2007 through April 2008, and two months after they attend the 2008 Board of Trustee Institute held on March 27-29, 2008 hosted by Achieving the Dream. In all, twenty-two months of board minutes were examined from each college beginning in the fall semester of 2006 through the spring semester of 2008.

Board minutes were examined to learn how trustees monitor interventions and gather information regarding student success. The analysis also examined patterns of student success decision-making and policy development by the governing boards.

Each of the colleges reported in their board minutes an annual review of the Board of Regents accountability report. For each college, the Board of Regents reviews each of the college's performance of nine measures. The governing boards reviewed the state accountability measures. Trustees stated in interviews that they used the data as benchmarks to improve programs and services for students. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the colleges work together to meet the Governor's requirement to provide "information necessary to determine the effectiveness and quality of the education students receive at individual institutions and the basis to evaluate the institutions' use of state resources". Colleges are grouped by size from very large to small. The report examines enrollment by:

1. Ethnicity and gender over a three-year period
2. Semester credit hours / contact hours
3. Graduation / persistence rates
4. Degrees and certificates awarded
5. Percentage of students who transfer to a senior institution
6. First-time undergraduate persistence rates
7. Percentage of technical students enrolled
8. Percentage of students employed within one year of graduation
9. Licensure rates

College A Board Meeting Minutes

Strategic Planning

The Board of Governors conducts an annual board workshop where trustees examine student information, review the college's Master Plan, measure progress toward strategic intents in the strategic plan and discuss future directions for the college. At the workshop, board members reviewed a plan for improving success in developmental courses, defined measures for assessing student success and outlined a process for student input of learning outcomes.

Each month the mission and vision statement are posted at the top of all meeting agendas and recorded each month in the board minutes. Board members regularly review and discuss whether the statements reflect the true mission of the college. As a result of the review, the mission statement has been revised twice since August 2006 based on discussions at annual board workshops. The first revision to the mission statement was, “[The college] exists to improve quality of life by providing associate and baccalaureate degree programs, academic transfer programs, job skills training, and cultural enrichment in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The **board, our** faculty and staff are committed to responding to student needs, creating a learning environment, exceeding employer expectations and enriching our community”. A second revision was approved in Spring 2008 when board members unanimously approved a revised mission statement of the college to include a focus on “student success”. The mission statement was revised as follows: “[The college] exists to improve quality of life by providing associate and baccalaureate degree programs, academic transfer programs, job skills training, and

cultural enrichment in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The board, faculty and staff are committed *to student success by* responding to student needs, creating a *dynamic* learning environment, exceeding ~~employer~~ expectations, and enriching our community”.

Board members also reviewed the college’s strategic plan at the annual workshop where they revised the college’s strategic plan and reviewed the previous year’s milestones. In fall of 2007, board members and administrators worked together to set goals to increase graduate certificate numbers and added an additional milestone to implement the Achieving the Dream program. They also developed a plan for improving student success in developmental courses, and a strategic goal “Meeting the needs of students”. In addition, a strategic intent/milestone was added to “develop community panels to provide information about program needs” as a college wide responsibility.

After attending the Achieving the Dream Board of Trustee Institute, board members and the president presented a report to the rest of board. In addition, the college’s Achieving the Dream Grant proposal was reviewed and shared with the board. The report stated the college’s goals, strategies, and projected outcomes for the initiative.

Student Data Reports

The monthly student data reports for College A are outlined in Table 15. Quarterly reports are outlined in Table 16, and annual reports are outlined in Table 17.

Table 15. College A Monthly Student Data Review

The college enrollment data for credit and non-credit courses is examined. The college compared four years of enrollment (from 2002 – 2006) for credit and community courses and two years of trends for business and industry training. For business and industry, they reviewed enrollment by month and year-to-date, participant hours for month and participant hours for year-to-date. For concurrent and dual credit enrollment they examined enrollment by high school for the Fall semester. February 18, 2008, Dual Credit/ Concurrent Enrollment report looked for the first time at Spring 2007 and Spring 2008 enrollments of high schools students.

The college receives a report about the childcare assistance provided by “Sponsor a Student –Support a Child” scholarships. Foundation childcare scholarships are awarded through a financial aid committee. The fund is established as a childcare assistance program to help college students with young children. The program provides monetary support to students who enroll children in the Children’s Center.

Table 16. College A Quarterly Student Data Review

The college reviewed the following performance measures: Report on College Programs and Services (September), Report on State Performance Measures (December), Report on Enrollment Trends (March), Report on Performance (June). The report on Performance covers key areas of performance such as grade summaries for academic and workforce education majors, certification exam passing rates, number of degrees and certificates awarded, retention rates, and percentage of students employed. The report examines performance measures over a five-year period of time. Some of the indicators reported are: percentage of course completers, percentage of students who transfer to a university, percentage of students enrolled who are academically and economically disadvantaged, percentage of course completions and the number of degrees or certificates awarded.

The board receives quarterly reports on student performance through SACS Updates and Achieving the Dream initiative reports.

Table 17. College A Annual Student Data Review

The college examined a report on tutoring activities in the Learning Resource Center.

In August and September, the board reviewed the SACS Update / QEP report.

In August and September, the board received a report on the Achieving the Dream kick-off activities. In February, they reviewed the progress of Achieving the Dream.

The annual Enrollment report was provided to the Board as required by State law.

In December, board members reviewed the Report of State Performance Measures.

In October, trustees reviewed the CCSSE Report. In addition, they will continue to use the Gulf Coast Standard Student Survey (Student Satisfaction Inventory). They also reviewed a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) satisfaction report on counseling services and they looked at Community Education – Course/Instructor Evaluations Satisfaction Reports. Instructors administered the surveys at the last class meeting to determine satisfaction with course delivery.

Center for Business/Industry Training (CBIT) Satisfaction Report January-July 2006 was examined. The questionnaires were given to students at the end of the course to evaluate 5 different categories of course delivery. The Center provides the following services: safety training, computer training, professional development, facilities arrangement and Web-based training.

Annual Library Report - number of stations and number of students using the library, in addition to the amount of funding provided for books purchased by the college.

Student senate report – provided information regarding their 2006-2007 goals, activities and achievements.

Learning Assistant Center Report – gave information on the number of students using the lab.

Student Success Initiatives.

Board members developed an Achieving the Dream Budget for 2006-2007 of \$50,000 from the Houston Endowment to be used for the Achieving the Dream project.

They also reviewed WISE Donations and Excellence Funds that support new and

emerging needs of the college. The unrestricted fund provides for flexibility and quick response to the college's critical needs. Board members also approved \$2,500 mini grants for the 2006-2007 academic year to faculty and staff members. In addition, a Children's Center fee structure was recommended to change childcare rates to better meet the needs of college students.

College B Board Meeting Minutes

Strategic Planning

At the board's workshop, trustees reviewed Achieving the Dream strategies to improve minority male student engagement and academic achievement at the college. During the year, several job positions were created and organizational changes were made to implement Achieving the Dream programs. The board also received a brief overview of the Achieving the Dream college initiatives: new strategies for an early-alert program in which counselors work in the classroom with students, linked classes – a study skills class for students at risk of failing a course and supplemental instruction for students to be tutored by a student mentor who passed the course with a grade of an A or B. During one of the monthly board meetings the Board Chairman, “commented on the progress of the Achieving the Dream Initiative and the need for the board and the college to connect.” He stated that the board has been receiving data on students every month. In addition, he said that, “We must work collaboratively to help decrease the drop out rate of our students and increase efforts for more student success.”

A departmental Dean, “presented to the board a follow-up report on the data from the Achieving the Dream college initiatives. The Dean discussed the demographics of

the control group in the assessment” with board members. After attending the Achieving the Dream Board of Trustee Institute:

The Board Chairman gave a detailed report of the recent trip to the Achieving the Dream Institute in New Mexico. The chairman noted that the college was recognized for their outstanding contributions to this project. He also encouraged board members and the college’s faculty and staff to continue working together to support this initiative.

The president “noted that the college will continue to provide data bits and strategies to improve our student success”. In addition, the president presented to the board:

A reminder to the board of how committed we are to student success. We will continue to work on student success. We will have a workshop this fall to focus on student success. The President also presented the board an update of the Achieving the Dream grant. She provided the board with priorities based on data: improved student success in gatekeeper courses, improved student success in developmental courses, increased usage of student support services, and improved student success due to faculty professional development.

The President also provided implementation stages of the grant:

Supplemental instruction in specific gatekeeper courses –Math 1414 and History 1301; linked courses in specific developmental courses – developmental courses linked with course content for Math 315 and Study Skills Reading 302 and Psychology and Reading; information about

student services – information booth and comprehensive list of services;
faculty and staff professional development – speakers, faculty discussion
groups and faculty led seminars for new and best practices.

The measurable results will provide:

Improved successful completion rates in and less withdrawal rates from
Math 1414 and History 1301; improved successful completion rates in and
less withdrawal rates from Reading 301 and 302, English 302, and Math
315; increased usage of student support services resulting in higher
completion rates and less withdrawal rates for all credit courses; faculty
and staff professional development leading to improved student success.

Student Data Reports

The monthly student data reports for College B are outlined in Table 18 and
annual reports are outlined in Table 19.

Table 18. College B Monthly Student Data Review

Discussed Achieving the Dreaming monthly during the President's report. At one meeting, the President provided the board with a copy of *Successful Initiatives in the Recruitment and Retention of Community College Students: Making a Difference in the Lives of Students*, a compilation of articles written as a result of a grant for student retention received from the Houston Endowment by the four community colleges in Harris County.

The President presented the board the highlights of, *A Culture of Confidence: A Culture of Evidence*. The pertinent information from the report is as follows: We look at thoughtful decision-making based on data, focused on student success; intentional investment of talents of our faculty and staff and intentional investments of money, and high standards for students, faculty and administration. It takes discipline and focus by the entire college team and hard work each and every day to be successful. We are successful based on evidence that students are learning. When there is good evidence we have confidence. Confidence in the college, each other, respect for one another and sustained success. When you don't have evidence and rely on anecdotes and hallway discussions, it leads to less confidence and blaming other people. We are truly headed in the right direction as we look at the evidence. The President shared comments from a new faculty member that her experience at the college had been enlightening and gratifying. She had seen a positive attitude and energy among the faculty and staff to reach the college's goal.

The board regularly reviewed and discussed student data on a monthly basis. "The college has worked extremely hard on enrollment issues and enrollment has increased by approximately six percent over the last year. The board also reviews data about continuing education enrollment and contact hours. We want the board to have the data for accountability measures to understand where we are doing a great job and where we are looking at improving. The board also reviews demographic student data and has been provided with student data and definitions on gatekeeper courses".

The President provided the board with a preliminary enrollment report. Information included funded data (headcount and contact hours), credit data, continuing education data, ethnicity, gender, and cities where students reside. "This is an effort to provide the board with data and for the college to be data driven".

The President provided the board with information in response to the ACCT Conference regarding accountability issues.

Table 18. (continued) College B Monthly Student Data Review

Each month the board receives a snapshot of information focused on accountability issues to keep the board apprised of reporting and to make good decisions for the future, which are “based on data and the needs of our students”.

“The board was presented with data on cohorts. The Achieving the Dream cohort is defined as those students who enter the college for the first time in the fall of the year. The charts presented to the board included the following data: percentage of the original fall cohort who returned in the spring; percentage who came back the next fall; percentage who returned again the next fall; the percentage of the original cohort who received either a certificate or degree at some time within the first year; and percentage of the original cohort who received either a certificate or degree by the third year. The board was provided with information regarding breakouts by age, gender, Pell grant status; race/ethnicity; major; and attendance status. The information focused on the key indicators of where the college’s focus is needed”.

“College personnel presented an update on our Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) part of our SACS accreditation process as we continue to work on critical thinking skills for our students. Faculty reports show students have heightened awareness of critical thinking skills in addition to improvements in reading”. “We are doing what we have set out to do with the faculty learning communities and have learned more about testing measurements.” “The initiative is on target calendar wise, for the 5 year projection and is currently in the 2nd cycle of this learning project”.

Table 19. College B Annual Student Data Review

College personnel presented a brief overview of the Institutional Effectiveness Report Card highlighting two goals with results.

The board received enrollment information disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, and age. Discussion and questions ensued among the board.

The President was pleased to announce a recent report out of Community College Week, “Analysis of U.S. Department of Education Data” that the college is ranked number six in the nation out of the top fifty fastest-growing public two-year colleges in the nation. This report is based on institutions with a service range of 5,000 – 9,999 students. (Fall of 2005 -2006), “Concerted efforts of increasing enrollment are paying off”.

“The board received the Graduation Report. Within that report the board received numbers and disaggregates data by age, ethnicity and gender. As many may know we received our successful SACS reaffirmation. We are currently working on the core curriculum learning outcomes assessment. This final report is due in March. We have every assurance that the final report will be just as successful”.

The board reviewed a report of the College and Comparison Groups for Student Support Services – Usage Ranges in 2007 CCSSE (Community College Survey of Student Engagement) results.

Student Success Initiatives

The college has partnerships with several universities through joint admission programs: Sam Houston State University, the University of Houston, Texas Tech University, and scholarships with Texas A & M University in the department of Geosciences, which is specifically for the college’s outstanding students transferring to Texas A & M University. The board minutes noted that the college would continue to work on international programs as well. In addition, the minutes discussed the college’s business partnerships with area manufacturers and petrochemical industries to provide workforce training.

The president provided information from two community focus groups held by the college in predominately African American and Hispanic communities served by the college. The minutes noted that, “both focus groups were well attended”. The President thanked board members for their participation in the respective focus groups. The board also received details gathered from student and faculty focus groups at the college. Faculty and students were asked at focus meetings to share barriers to student success, provide suggestions for eliminating barriers, and to recommend actions the college should take to improve student success at the college.

College C Board Meeting Minutes

Strategic Planning

At the board workshop, trustee’s finalized the college’s strategic goals for next year. In addition, the board has a Strategic Issues Discussion agenda item on the monthly meeting agenda. Trustees also approved the following policies:

1. Establish goals consistent with the role and mission of the college.
2. Shall insist on the clarity of focus and mission.
3. Assist the chancellor in the achievement of performance goals.
4. Shall nurture the college to the end that the college achieves its full potential within its role and mission.

In addition, after attending each of the Achieving the Dream Board of Trustee Institutes, board members shared with other governing board members information they had learned from the conference.

Student Data Reports

Monthly student data reports for College C are outlined in Table 20.

Table 20. College C Monthly Student Data Review

A board member commented that the board should address student achievement at every meeting. "College personnel began providing Achieving the Dream Student Success Presentations monthly. Presentations consist of course / program data and student data". One month, board members received a report from an Automotive Business Owner stating, "I have not had technician hiring issues in a long time. I've had very little turnover and I attribute that to the caliber of people we've gotten from training". He stated that the program is critical for any forward-thinking dealer.

The board chair suggested including student success as part of the logo when replacing the one in the Board room.

Several board members had comments regarding implementation of an employee accountability system. A fellow board member stated that eventually raises will be performance based. In March 2008 the board discussed, "Linking Critical Faculty Behavior to Student Success".

The board reviewed the passing rate of nursing students.

College personnel presented to board members an Institutional Outcomes College Preparatory Cycle I Report.

The board reviewed a presentation from college personnel entitled *Linking Critical Faculty Behavior to Student Success* to discuss improving student success by empowering faculty.

Student Success Initiatives

The board approved a three dollar tuition increase per semester credit hour for both in-district and out-of-district students. One dollar of the increase is used to fund student success initiatives at the college. The College also approved a \$50 per semester credit hour charge for students repeating a course three or more times. The charge will apply to students attempting the same course or a substantially similar course more than the second time and will apply to in-district and out-of-district students.

College D Board Meeting Minutes

Strategic Planning

Board members approved revisions to the Institutional Plan. Specifically, changes in goals and strategies to meet the plan adopted the previous year. According to board minutes, the plan will follow the Quality Texas Guidelines. The board also revised the Records and Retention Policy to rename the Record Retention Office of college D as the Office of Planning and Institutional Advancement.

Student Data Reports

The monthly student data reports for College D are outlined in Table 21, Quarterly reports are outlined in Table 22, and annual reports are outlined in Table 23.

Table 21. College D Monthly Student Data Review

“The President presents a monthly President’s Report highlighting: the advancement report, important dates on campus, and a general overview of ongoing campus projects”.

“The President calls attention to program highlights and Achieving the Dream student data such as tuition discounting, enrollment report, and enrollment statistics, including dual credit enrollments.”

The board also received a monthly update on the Student Center.

Table 22. College D Semester Student Data Review

“The President presented the President’s Report calling special attention to the Fall enrollment numbers from the first day of classes and the upcoming dates of meetings and events on campus”.

“The President presented the President’s Report calling special attention to the Fall enrollment numbers including dual credit enrollment”.

Table 23. College D Annual Student Data Review

The board reviews the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) report.

The board reviews a College End of Year Report. “College personnel called attention to the executive summary, the detailed evaluations, and supplemental attachments. The institutional planning committee has been revitalized and will align goals and objectives in the coming year with the Quality Texas criteria”.

Student Success Initiatives

The board was presented a brief summary of the workforce efficiency study that was conducted at the college. In short, the study found that the college is efficient and meets the mission of the organization. The board also approved several new policies. One policy limits the withdrawals to six per student with cause. Another policy was approved that would limit the number of courses a student can drop without good cause at the college.

Student Success Policies Aligned to Budget

During interviews, Board members were asked if student success policies were aligned to the budget at their institution. One board member responded:

Yes, because if you need a new program, any adjustment you need to make will affect the budget. It affects the budget to the extent needed to make the program successful. Whatever is needed for student success, is a high priority for our board. We all buy into that. As mandates come in, we do not cut back on student success.

Another trustee responded:

Yes, we are in the process of aligning the budget” to priorities. All these new programs and initiatives are put in our strategic plan and goals. The first priority in our budget process is to make sure we have money for those items. They get a priority because those are our goals for the year and part of our strategic plan. Our president is reviewed and evaluated on achieving those goals and strategic intents. Not only do we get a budget, but it is a priority for her to see that these things get done because that’s what her evaluation is going to be based on.

As one trustee explained:

What I hope to do is to take this data and, number one, provide enough money to put together a staff that can work on these numbers so we know if we really are headed off in the right direction. Then, at that point, the board needs to tell the president what we want to do.

Other colleges noted that they were in the early stages of aligning their student success initiatives to their budget:

We’re barely just getting into that. One of the things we did was increase student tuition two dollars. [However], I suggested to the board that we increase it three dollars. With the extra dollar we would fund student achievement initiatives.

The board did change the increase from two dollars to three dollars with the additional dollar dedicated to student success initiatives. With the additional money:

The college hired advisors and counselors for high schools. We're looking very strong at our funding" and during board discussions for an upcoming bond issue. We eliminated some things because they really weren't geared toward student success. We did discuss those that were in support of student success. However, some of them weren't and those got cut.

SUMMARY

The first research question examined to what extent community college governing boards use mechanisms to understand or monitor student success. The study found that both internal and external mechanisms affected trustee decision-making. The college's administration and employees were internal influences while sources such as business and industry and community stakeholders were external influences for board member actions.

Board members use internal communication with college administration and employees and reports from departments within the college to assist them with decisions and plans of action. Within the college, board members examined reports on student and academic support services, monitored learning outcomes and assessments, and reviewed the learning process through engaging learning experiences and support services to students. Trustees responded that effective communication and valid student data are dependent on the college employing good leaders in administration and sound employees within the college's departments.

External mechanisms influencing board member decisions included community partnerships, stakeholder political considerations, and public opinion data. Board members reported community partnerships with other state agencies and educational institutions; in addition, partnerships were formed with community businesses and industries. Trustees also stated that they relied on public opinion data collected both formally and informally. Informal data was collected through interaction with citizens in the community at civic clubs, community events and day-to-day interactions with others. Formal data was typically collected through polls, surveys and focus groups. Information collected by the board members aided them in their decision-making and actions on the governing board.

The second research question examined to what extent governing boards review or analyze briefings of student success interventions. It was determined that all trustees review and analyze student data briefings on a monthly basis and that trustees and college personnel used the data in developing the college's strategic plan. They also used the data to address critical issues. Board members stated that once critical issues were identified they incorporated them into the college's strategic plan. Examples of critical issues included drop in enrollment, drop in academic achievement noted on reports board member monitor regularly, and changes in partnerships.

The final research question examined how, if at all, governing boards alter or prioritize their student success policymaking agenda. The study found that board members initially changed their policymaking agenda by transitioning the climate and culture of the colleges and placing a priority on student success. Cultural changes have

led to some policy development and new initiatives, which are supported with college resources that are aligned to the institution's budget. Cultural changes noted by board members were:

- Strong leadership and good working relationship with the CEO and among fellow board members.
- Board initiated culture focused on student success.
- Board's established a vision and values for the college
- Trustees utilized student data routinely provided by college administration to aid them in decision-making and to support actions by the board.

Interviews and board meeting minutes revealed several policy changes implemented by colleges. A review of the board meeting minutes indicated that one college reviewed student data and discussed student success strategies in-depth every month. Two of the colleges began to increase the frequency of reviewing student data and increase the number of agenda items to discuss student success strategies after attending the March 2007 Achieving the Dream Board of Trustees Institute. The fourth college showed little activity regarding student success for the time period the board minutes were reviewed in this study. Interviews and a review of the board meeting minutes found several policy changes implemented and actions taken by the boards to enhance student success at institutions were as follows:

- Trustees reviewed their mission statement regularly and revised the mission statement as needed to reflect the student success priorities of the colleges.

- Trustees developed strategic goals and objectives to examine disaggregated student data and monitor student success.
- Trustees received feedback from the community, particularly underserved and minority members, to enhance academic programs.
- Trustees established partnerships with universities in addition to business and industry.
- Board members regularly monitored student data reports and established benchmarks to track academic progress of students.
- Board members reviewed reports disaggregated in data sets.
- Board members established policies to encourage students to persist and succeed such as approving a credit hour charge for students repeating a course for three or more times and limiting the number of withdraws per student with cause.
- Trustees aligned the budget to programs to provide resources to enhance student success.
- One college established a Quality Enhancement Department to compile student data and provide reports to the board and administration.
- Boards established and provided resources for student scholarships and programs such as “Sponsor a student – support a child”, tutoring programs, provided mini grants to faculty and staff members, and established earmarked fees for student success initiatives.

Overall, in their responses on the CCI questionnaire, seventy-five to 100% of trustees noted full or partial implementation of the practices at their institution except on

two items requested on the questionnaire. One institution noted no implementation of data collection depicting student persistence, learning and attainment routinely disaggregated by income level reported to the board. In addition, one institution reported that data collection depicting student persistence, learning and attainment routinely disaggregated by race/ ethnicity reported to the board was under discussion at the college.

DISCUSSION

ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNING BOARDS

Having final authority, trustees are accountable for student success at their institutions. Board members seek to perform their jobs well and seek to represent their community to the best of their ability. Trustees have a responsibility to represent the interests and opinions of people in their service area. Since they have close ties to the community, they have a vested interest in the academic success of the students they serve. Individuals who become board members wish to give back to the community because they are interested in improving the lives of others and they want to make a difference.

Governing board commitments are time-consuming and challenging roles. Through its statutory authority, the board establishes policies, attends to the long-range interests of the college, and is in control of the systems that define the college and its character (Boggs, 2006, p. 21). Board members in this study understand the importance of actively discussing issues effecting academic achievement with college employees by becoming engaged and focused on student success.

MECHANISMS TO UNDERSTAND OR MONITOR STUDENT SUCCESS

Internal Mechanisms

Communication

Teamwork is crucial to accomplishing student success initiatives. One person cannot effectively work in a vacuum. Trustees in this study stated that an effective and productive working relationship with the college's president was needed to be successful

in meeting the institution's goals and objectives, as well as to address critical issues as they arise. Routinely, board chairs and CEOs collaborated to plan monthly meeting agenda items. During these meetings they frequently discussed student success data and the progress of student success initiatives. However, board members were clear that they relied on the direction of the CEO and the college's employees to recommend student success strategies and policies for board approval.

In addition to collaboration between board members and the president, Board members stated that they depended on input from students, college personnel and stakeholders in the community to identify student success needs that should be addressed by the college. Therefore, solutions to addressing student success lie in the ability of the board and the college's employees to work as a team to communicate effectively with each other and the college's stakeholders. Board members stated that they depended on insight from educators to make policy recommendations for the governing board to approve. Policy recommendations from admissions, financial aid departments, and faculty members are important because these employees have direct contact with students and are key to student engagement, which is essential to student success. By communicating with staff and faculty members on the front lines, the administration understands the types of challenges facing students and can then address those challenges by making policy recommendations to the board. Therefore, armed with the information they need to enhance student success, board members can approve data-informed decisions.

At colleges where there is little to no communication between board members and administration regarding student success, board members should initiate the conversation. Things that are important to the board eventually become things that are important to college administration and departmental employees. The job of educating students does not rest with one person or one department. It is everyone's responsibility; therefore, it is important for all board members, the college's administration and employees to commit to helping students succeed.

In this study, initiating policies that stimulated student success at the colleges created changes within the colleges' culture and initiated change in many of the colleges' practices. Changes within an organization can be stressful for all involved. Consequently, board members attempted to gradually initiate changes at their institutions through collaborative dialog with employees. When organizations struggle to meet their goals, it is usually from a failure of people within the organization to communicate effectively. Effective communication strategies can ease resistance and secure buy-in for change (Heyman, 1994). If the college is to reach its goals, communication from trustees is essential so that employees understand the need for change and the objectives to be accomplished. Strong communication from leaders will not ensure success; however, poor communication will certainly sabotage it (Robbins, 1996). It is critical that board member communications are clear and described in terms that everyone can understand. Clearly communicating student success as a priority helped initiate the process at the colleges and created buy-in from employees by establishing support for the success of the initiatives. Hence, board members and CEOs in this study were including

employees in the change process and were developing inclusive visions so that college personnel could participate in addressing student success challenges at their colleges.

Human Resources

Successful organizations attract, employ and retain high quality, motivated employees because enthusiastic employees accomplish more than employees who are not inspired. Board members reported partial to full implementation of practices emphasizing student persistence, learning during recruitment, hiring, orientation, deployment, evaluation, and development of personnel at their colleges. Therefore, half of the trustee's responses indicated that employment practices focused on student success were implemented in some visible and substantial way at the college. It would be beneficial for board members and CEOs at these colleges to begin reviewing all employment practices to determine practices needing change or areas needing to be modified. The survey results also found that colleges needed to define the roles of the employees through performance evaluations so employee evaluation measures are aligned with student success goals. Board members and administration also examined recruitment and selection methods, staffing patterns, new employee orientation programs and workload arrangements for alignment with student success goals.

There is a saying among managers that what gets measured gets done. For that reason, it is essential that employment practices are in-sync with the college's student success priorities. If measurements are not aligned with goals, there is little incentive for employees to perform otherwise. Most importantly, the data showed that board members and CEO's should consider aligning the college's reward system to recognize and reward

outstanding contributions from employees to improving student success. Board members in this study also considered reviewing operational processes so that clear alignment of all institutional policies leads to enhancing student success programs, all of which focused on successfully reaching the college's vision and mission.

Another critical step to enhancing student success is hiring people who are suited well to the job they will be asked to perform. Hiring the right employees can get student success initiatives moving in the right direction. Subsequently, after employees have been hired, professional development is equally important to enhance the skills and knowledge of employees. Most board members reported partial implementation of faculty and staff development opportunities focused on student success. Therefore, colleges should examine the professional development opportunities that are provided and evaluate each development opportunity carefully for its benefit to the college's student success goals.

College Support Services

Student and Academic Support Service departments are responsible for helping students achieve their academic goals. Incoming students usually have their initial contact at the college with employees in these departments. Therefore, it is vital for trustees and CEOs to understand and support practices used within these departments to help students be successful. Trustees reported that a planned array of student and academic support services, designed in accord with evidence-based best practices for optimal impact on student persistence, learning and attainment were partially to fully implemented at the colleges. Board members also noted that closer examination of the

advising processes was needed as well as reviewing methods to improve student success through the use of technology.

Advising processes

Advisors have an important role at the colleges that extends beyond assisting students with degree program decisions and course enrollment choices. Academic advisors can aid students in preparing for their future and encourage students to explore the services and opportunities available at the college beyond their coursework, thus enhancing the student's overall college experience.

Board members understood that a good relationship between the student and the advisor is essential. Many advisors guide students through coursework options and help students to choose extracurricular activities and programs to enrich their college experience. Sometimes advisors guide students to alternate goals and career paths more fitting to their abilities and interests. In the end however, advisors help students achieve their goals and develop their potential.

Technology

Students are accustomed to receiving information from multiple technological sources and the technically savvy student body of today will absorb more information if course materials are delivered utilizing a multitude of technical delivery systems. Using technology has enabled students to complete college applications, course registration, as well as completing coursework by distance learning through Internet access on computers and multiple mobile devices. In addition, advisors and counselors can network with students through email or text messaging and can use technology to track student

progress from interest in enrollment to completion of a degree or certificate program. If students are not tracked throughout their academic program, enhancing student success becomes problematic for colleges.

Board members also cited the need to use technology in the classroom. By integrating technology in the classroom, students are exposed to several modes of instruction. They learn to explore the vast amount of resources available online with their instructors and to scrutinize information they receive.

Student Learning

Trustees stated that closely monitoring student learning through data reports was essential to accomplishing student success goals and objectives. By monitoring learning outcomes, learning assessments and learning processes, board members are able to track the academic progress of students. Board members also stated that understanding and monitoring of student success practices are necessary. Monitoring these practices was seen as a crucial first step to improving student success at their college.

Board members were clear that educators define learning outcomes, assessments and processes. It is the Governing Board's responsibility to monitor and review reports analyzing the progress of learning outcomes; it is not to determine how the college reaches the objective. Accordingly, board members were cautious not to micromanage the processes within the institution in pursuit of accomplishing the institution's student success goals.

Monitoring Student Learning

Frequent monitoring of learning outcomes is necessary to tracking advancement of student success initiatives. Most of the trustees responded that their colleges had clearly defined outcomes for student learning. However, half of the trustees reported partial implementation of clearly defined outcomes for core abilities/ general education courses and outcomes congruent with the mission and values of the institution. One college reported marginal implementation of learning outcomes that are prominently and publicly displayed and communicated. Hence, board members, in collaboration with educators, are in the process of defining student outcomes and aligning their college's mission and values to student success goals. They also recognize the importance of communicating the college's focus on student success to stakeholders in the community.

Outcomes are vital to tracking the progress between the delivery of student success initiatives and their impact on student achievement. Stakeholders increasingly believe public institutions need to be held accountable for results. They want to be assured that tax dollars are being used efficiently and effectively to educate students. The evaluation of student success outcomes attempts to assess the value and quality of academic programs. Therefore, close monitoring of student data by board members is important so they can be responsive when communicating student success accomplishments to the community and other stakeholders.

Learning Assessment

Learning assessments are vital for board members and employees to ensure satisfactory progress to accomplishing the college's student success goals. Half of the

trustees responded that colleges had partially implemented a systematic assessment and had documentation supporting progress of learning outcomes. Board members reported that faculty members designed, identified and implemented an array of appropriate assessments of student learning in all credit courses that were marginally to fully implemented at the colleges. In addition, faculty members developed criteria or rubrics that are used in ascertaining and documenting each student's level of attainment of required learning outcomes that were marginally to fully implemented at institutions. Therefore, board members were asking CEO's to work with departments to identify areas needing assessments in order to track and document each student's academic achievement progress.

Assessments with developed criteria or rubrics enable trustees and educators to track the academic progress of students and to measure the development of student success programs against a set of defined standards. An assessment rubric allows Board members and educators to understand student progress towards measurable goals and objectives. In addition, educators are able to use the data to identify areas of instruction needing improvement to enhance student success.

Learning Process Through Engaging Learning Experiences

By providing engaging learning experiences for students, colleges will increase the likelihood of reaching their student success goals. Half of the trustees reported that students participated in a diverse array of engaging learning experiences that were aligned with required outcomes and designed in accord with "good educational practices". However, board members reported marginal to full implementation of clearly

articulated learning outcomes at different levels of the curriculum, using clear and rational prerequisites that are aligned in sequential levels with one another. Trustees also reported marginal to full implementation of practices at the college to provide students' opportunities for experiential learning such as service learning, internships, or cooperative learning. Likewise, board members noted marginal to full implementation of college practices to routinely identify high-failure-rate courses and to undertake collaborative re-design of those courses to promote student success while maintaining high quality standards.

Board members have a responsibility to establish goals for student success; however, they reported that they relied on educators to implement the objectives of the college's strategic plan. Consequently, administrators and faculty members need to work together to align educational outcomes to goals approved by the board. Collaborative communication between trustees, college personnel and students is beneficial to selecting effective methods to engage learners in creative learning experiences. Then, teaching methods could be incorporated into the strategic plan to fulfill the plan's goals and objectives. Board members, through their connections in the community, could assist educators in securing service learning, internships and cooperative learning opportunities for students. Student success initiatives are effective when students are engaged in the learning process. Therefore, the challenge for trustees and college personnel is to determine which types of academic experiences motivate students to persist and learn. In addition, through student data reports, board members could identify high-failure-rate

courses and ask administration and educators to collaborate in redesigning those courses to improve student success.

Learning Process Through Support Services for Learners

Providing support services for community college students is necessary because many students have multiple at-risk challenges to overcome in order to succeed academically. Seventy-five percent of trustees reported full implementation for effective developmental and remedial education, tutoring and other appropriate support services for learners who are under-prepared for college-level work. Tutoring is essential to many students in developmental education and a critical initiative that requires continuous support by the community colleges. Trustees reported that they monitored progress reports of supplemental education and tutoring services; in addition, they monitored the effect of these services on student success. Hiring exceptional employees to tutor is important; tutors should not only have subject matter knowledge, but should also be effective, caring and empathic communicators.

External Mechanisms

Community and Stakeholder Relationships

Board members have a responsibility to ensure that their colleges quickly respond to community needs. Trustees in the study described their college's relationships with other higher education institutions as positive. They frequently share resources and developed partnerships with each other in order to better serve business and industry. Through these relationships, community colleges and their partners share in problem solving, and become more efficient and effective in utilizing resources when carrying out

such efforts. Trustees reported that through partnerships with other colleges and universities their colleges shared resources such as library services, faculty and staff member job appointments and facilities. Correspondingly, through partnerships with business and industry, colleges received funding for facilities, and funding for faculty and staff job positions. In return, business and industry partners receive from the college specialized workforce training to meet their needs; in addition, they receive a pool of job ready citizens in the community.

Trustees stated that exploring opportunities in the community were important; however, it is vital to remain true to the mission of the college when considering these opportunities. One trustee stated that the governing board reviews the college's mission statement when decisions are agreed on by the board to determine that decisions fit with the college's mission. If the decision is not a good match with the mission statement, the board then revisits the issue. Effective mission statements describe the unique qualities of the college in addition to the direction and focus of the institution. Therefore, it is important for trustees to remain true to the college's mission statement to ensure that the college stays on course towards its desired goals and objectives.

Public Opinions

As politicians, trustees are responsible to the citizens they represent and seek to match the interest of the college to the interest of their constituents. Therefore, board members sought feedback from stakeholders after collaborative projects with partners to measure the level of success and make improvements to programs if needed. The aggregate of the responses received from the community assist board members in their

decision-making. Trustees collected opinion data in both informal and formal ways. They collected informal data from sources such as community affairs, civic clubs, churches and sporting events; whereas, formal data was collected using polls, surveys and focus groups of business/industry partners and students.

Student opinions were essential to understanding and establishing student success goals. Trustees gathered information from students on assessments such as CCSSE and surveys developed by college employees; in addition, they used reports from student and faculty member focus groups. From the data obtained and analyzed, trustees implemented changes to improve student success. At one college, board members approved developing a childcare center in order to meet student's childcare needs. Use of both quantitative and qualitative data by board members are essential to understanding how some students are successful and other students are not. After analyzing student data, administration and board members possess the resources to make informed decisions about allocating the college's resources and formulating policy decisions.

Board members also sought input from business and industry leaders in their service area. By developing a relationship with business and industry and by seeking their input, board members and educators worked together to develop programs that prepare students for job placement. To this end, colleges surveyed business and industry leaders in order to use the information to better serve the businesses' employment training needs. Industry advisory committees were also used to determine if the training needs of business and industry were being met.

Trustees also sought the opinions from business and industry leaders before initiating bond elections. Businesses pay a large portion of the local taxes; therefore, board members wanted to gage their level of support for tax increases proposed by the college. Support of any college's bond issue by the business community is critical to the success of the campaign.

Trustees also noted that stakeholder political considerations were taken into account when making decisions about student success initiatives. For example, at the state level, it was important to understand the priorities of lawmakers and to seek funding along mutual interests of both the college and legislators. In addition, trustees in the study also stated that they considered the opinions of fellow board members and noted that it was essential to have a good working relationship with other members of the board. Gaining consensus on student success initiatives is preferred; however, as one board member explained, consensus is not always reached and sometimes decisions are finalized by majority vote.

While trustees used public opinion data to understand the needs of stakeholders, one trustee felt that the college influenced public opinion more than public opinion influenced the college when making student success decisions. Trustees and administration influenced public opinion through reports at community meetings and in the media. By outlining the college's projections for change and communicating the college's plans to modify programs and initiatives, the college could effectively sway public opinion. Therefore, the college was proactively addressing community issues rather than reacting to community needs. In addition, board members agreed that

statements to the community regarding student success should be unified to strengthen the college's message and to avoid miscommunication.

REVIEW AND ANALYZE STUDENT DATA

Routinely Monitor Data

Progress of student success goals can be measured through routine monitoring of student data. All of the colleges reviewed student data frequently. While board members did not always have lengthy discussions about the data, they did review and briefly discuss the data analysis provided by the college. Board members also compared their college's student data statistics to peer institutions. Understanding and monitoring student data provides board members with information to be used in decision-making and in policy development.

It is critical for trustees to understand and monitor processes for effectiveness and the value each contributes to student success because educational institutions are responsible for developing individuals who will be successful in the workforce as well as lifelong learners. Board members depended on college employees to analyze data and present reports to the board. All board members agreed that trustees should strive to monitor academic quality routinely and credited Achieving the Dream with assisting trustees through its Board of Trustee Institute.

Strategic Planning

Trustees said it was essential to have student success goals and objectives in a college's strategic plan. They noted that leadership behavior and decisions should be aligned with the stated mission and philosophy of a college. Board members formed

strategic plans with guidance from each college's administration. When administrators put students first, a college is successful in reaching its vision, mission, and objectives to enhance student success.

Through their input into the strategic planning process, trustees and college employees over time form ownership for a plan. Board members must also ensure that a college's resources and budgets are aligned to priorities in a plan. A college's strategic plan outlines how progress towards student success goals will be measured and through routine review of a plan trustees can adjust the goals and objectives as needed throughout the year. Plans that receive input from all levels of the organization build consensus and inspire a unified vision of student success.

For one college, it was critical in the strategic planning process to develop a vision and mission statement to reflect the organizational change focusing on student success. Board members stated that reviewing the mission statement throughout the year assisted board members in remaining focused on the college's goals. According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), the vision should appeal to the values, hopes and ideals of employees and stakeholders to gain their support for change.

Most of the trustees reported that they had a fully integrated process for institutional evaluation and planning at their colleges. All trustees responded that all colleges had a strategic plan that clearly and succinctly stated the goals for future development and that each plan was used to guide operational planning for the fiscal year. However, board members stated that the colleges had marginal to full implementation of practices demonstrating the ability to stop pursuing activities which

were off-mission, low priority or ineffective in promoting student success. Also, board members reported marginal to full implementation of practices when using student and institutional assessments to form plans for improvement in programs and services.

Therefore, it would be beneficial for board members and administrators to examine the activities and programs of each college to eliminate ineffective practices. Subsequently, each college could use student and institutional assessments to outline a strategic plan to implement effective student success interventions. It is essential for governing boards and administrators to diagnose problems before looking for solutions when making changes to any college's funding. By examining an organization's effectiveness and the levels of funding for student success programs, governing boards and administrators can determine if funding levels are adequate. Funding levels must be sufficient enough to ensure the programs are successful as identified by their outcomes. It is important to study the effectiveness and levels of funding for programs to understand whether a college is reaching its goals in support of its vision and mission. Hence, it is critical to meet with each department to establish the level of funding needed for each program to succeed as outlined in the strategic plan.

Critical Issues

Trustees stated that they prioritize critical issues as they arose. Once colleges assessed critical issues, they developed a strategic plan and reviewed funding of the programs addressed. Subsequently, governing board members evaluated whether changes were needed operationally to departmental programs and budgets. When changes were identified in a college's strategic plan, trustees and administrators worked

in partnership to plan and lead the change processes. By prioritizing student success issues throughout the transition, trustees and administrators have been successful in promoting student focused organizational change.

Utilizing teams of key employees to assist in developing a plan for change, board members and administrators are able to identify critical problems and possible solutions to incorporate into a college's strategic plan. According to Fogg (1998), the strategic planning process is a roadmap for organizational change. Board members were clear that regardless of the issues that may arise, the board should keep the college focused on improving student success as a top priority.

ALTER AND PRIORITIZE POLICYMAKING AGENDA

Creating a Student Success Climate and Culture

Leadership behaviors for an institution are established at the top of the organization with the Board of Governors. If the board has a good working relationship with the president and college employees, then the college as a whole is likely to be a well functioning organization. However, if the board is in turmoil, over disagreements with the president or each other, then the organization is likely to struggle. Communication within the organization will depend on leadership behaviors of trustees and college administration. Trustees in the study agreed that setting a climate and culture focused on student success was key to accomplishing strategic plan goals.

According to trustees, gaining consensus among board members was important when establishing a culture of student success. However, cooperation among all members of any group is not always possible. Several trustees discussed the challenges

they face as governing board members seek to establish common goals for the college with fellow trustees who serve for purposes other than enhancing the college or its students. Gaining consensus among board members is often a lengthy but worthwhile process that involves compromise and persuasion. When a unanimous agreement is not reached, governing board decisions are finalized by majority vote. Board members stated that preferably they desired to work together to determine common ground and to seek compromises as needed in the interest of the college's common goal of student success.

Working together to develop the vision, values and mission of the college is an essential step in the strategic planning process because it is a reflection of the culture of the institution. Most board members reported they had partially implemented a culture of evidence in pursuit of the college's mission. Half of the trustees reported that individuals and groups had a partial sense of the mission, values and vision of the college. Likewise, half of the trustees reported that their institution promotes and supports board engagement of the broader community in processes for planning and prioritizing. In addition, board members had partially implemented practices placing a high value on diversity and cultural competence. Through the mission and vision statement approved by board members, the college establishes where its priorities lie and what the institution seeks to accomplish. Therefore, it is essential to align the mission to student success priorities in order to transition the focus of college and change the institution's culture.

Board members noted that changing the culture of an institution evolves gradually over time and that they were in the early stages of changing the established cultures of their institutions. Specifically, board members said the colleges had a partial to full

institution-wide commitment of promoting student persistence, learning, attainment and equity that reflects as educational outcomes for all students. In addition, half of the trustees reported that individuals and groups within their institutions demonstrated a collective sense of responsibility for student persistence, learning and attainment. Correspondingly, while working to change the culture of each institution, board members are strengthening the diversity of the colleges; institutions embracing diversity are rich learning environments for students.

Board members in the study are seeking to establish a culture at colleges where decision-making is based on improving student success. Tracking student achievement is essential to the progress of student success initiatives. This process begins with analyzing student data. Trustees responded that colleges had marginally to fully implemented practices to collect and analyze reports of student success data such as course completion rates, retention rates, and certificate/ graduation rates. In addition, collecting and analyzing data depicting student persistence, learning and attainment by ethnicity was under discussion at one college. Also, one college noted that data depicting student persistence, learning and attainment by income has not been implemented. Therefore, board members and educators were collaborating to put systems in place at these campuses to generate data. Trustees were also working with college personnel to determine the types of additional reports the campuses needed to develop in order to have meaningful analysis useful in decision-making such as course completion rates, retention rates and disaggregated data by ethnicity and income level.

Trustees reported that the culture at their institutions was beginning to change as a result of colleges participating in the Achieving the Dream initiative. Board members were spending more time than ever at board meetings reviewing and discussing student data and strategies to improve student success. Trustees were communicating their focus of student success to internal and external stakeholders through board meetings and other community meetings. Board members also stated that the changes in the culture of the organization were filtering through all levels of the institution so that college personnel were now focusing on student success initiatives as well. Therefore, by focusing on student achievement, trustees were sending a message throughout the organization that it is an important issue for everyone at the college to address.

Board Meetings

Board members communicate their policymaking agenda through publicly held board meetings, which cover a variety of agenda items ranging from human resource management, operations and finance to academic affairs. Three themes emerged from the review of board meeting minutes for actions addressing student success: strategic planning board actions, review and analysis of student data reports and board approval of student success initiatives. Also, colleges in this study implemented several policy changes.

The minutes indicated that one college reviewed student data and discussed student success strategies in-depth every month. In addition, two of the colleges began to increase the frequency of reviewing student data and increase the number of agenda items to discuss student success strategies as a result of attending the March 2007

Achieving the Dream Board of Trustees Institute. Several board members commented that attending the institute had been an “eye opening experience” for them. For several board members, attending the Board of Trustees Institute was a critical incident that inspired them to initiated cultural changes at their institutions to prioritize student success in their decision-making and strategic plans. From interviews and a review of the minutes, the study found that board members and college CEO’s frequently stated publicly at board meetings their commitment to student success.

Strategic Planning

Governing board members conventionally discussed strategic planning at annual board workshops where trustees reviewed the progress of strategic plan goals and objectives and discussed future directions of their college. Board members outlined specific student success goals and objectives. One of the colleges developed additional job responsibilities for college personnel to carry out student success goals. Developing job responsibilities and creating job positions within the institution to oversee campus student success initiatives enables the college to coordinate student success efforts. In addition, colleges reported developing student success initiatives including an early-alert program, linked courses for students, and supplemental instruction programs. Early alert programs help college employees identify students who are struggling so they can receive assistance. Students identified through early alert programs receive supplemental instruction in addition to assistance with issues that range from counseling to financial aid.

At one institution, the college's mission statement was reviewed and evaluated each month at board meetings. Subsequently, the mission statement was used to guide in decision-making on the board. Twice between August 2006 and May 2008, the board revised the college's mission statement to reflect the board's commitment to student success. The first change the board approved stated: "*The board, our* faculty and staff are committed to responding to student needs, creating a learning environment exceeding employer expectations and enriching our community". The second change to the mission statement included "student success" in the mission of the college. It reads: "The board, faculty and staff are committed *to student success by* responding to the student needs, creating a *dynamic* learning environment, ~~employer~~ exceeding expectations and enriching our community". As stated earlier, aligning the mission statement to student success goals is essential to changing the culture of the institution.

Student Data Reports

Board meeting minutes also revealed that board members frequently reviewed student data to track the progress of student success initiatives. On a monthly basis, board members reviewed enrollment reports such as credit and non-credit course enrollment, business and industry workforce training enrollment, and dual-credit enrollment. Boards also reviewed and discussed at meetings student demographic data, gatekeeper course definitions, tuition discounting and various accountability measures to be implemented and improved. Moreover, at one college, the president discussed the progress of student success programs with the trustees each month during the "President's Report" agenda item and shared research articles about student success

initiatives with the board on a regular basis. Hence, board members and administration were publicly demonstrating their working relationship addressing student success and shared problem solving of student success issues at board meetings.

Each quarter board members reviewed reports on performance measures including grade summaries for credit and non-credit courses, course completion rates, number of degrees and certificates awarded, enrollment retention rates, and percentage of students employed after receiving training certificate or degree from the college. In addition, board members also reviewed SACS updates, QEP reports, Achieving the Dream initiative reports and reviewed enrollment trends. On an annual basis, board members reviewed tutoring activities, Achieving the Dream reports, retention rates, annual enrollment data, CCSSE reports, business and industry satisfaction reports, and various program reports of student progress and institutional effectiveness reports. Frequent monitoring of reports and understanding student data analysis enables board members to track the accomplishment of strategic plans and student success initiatives. When the data identifies programs not improving student success, board members and administration can coordinate their efforts to develop alternate strategies to address areas of concern.

Student Success Initiatives

Several student success initiatives were discussed at board meetings. One college received a monthly report on childcare assistance scholarships provided to students through financial aid. Board members approved the program after survey results revealed a need for childcare among the student body. Likewise, another college limited

the number of courses a student can drop both with cause and without cause. Board members based this decision on a report of data indicating an excessive number of course withdrawals from students. Therefore, as community colleges extend the opportunity of higher education to all students, board members and educators have an expectation for students to assume responsibility for their own academic progress by adopting policies regarding course completions.

Board members also approved and dedicated funding for student success initiatives. At one college, board members approved a three-dollar increase per student credit hour with one dollar dedicated to student success initiatives. In addition, the board also implemented a policy to charge \$50 per credit hour to students repeating a course three or more times. Again, board members and educators have an expectation for students to support initiatives designed to help them achieve their goals.

Board meeting agendas also revealed discussions of internal and external relationships and their effect on student success. Through meeting agenda items, several trustees addressed college relationships with four-year institutions and business partners. Partnerships are a necessity for any community college to meet its mission of serving community needs. Partnerships also provide colleges with shared resources that are vital as federal and state funding to colleges continues to dwindle. In order to determine if the institution was successful in meeting the needs of the community, one college received a brief summary of a workforce efficiency report stating the college was efficient and met its mission. Another board reported on focus groups conducted in Hispanic and African American communities to gather information regarding academic needs for citizens. In

addition, each of the boards whose members attended the Achieving the Dream Board of Trustees Institute, reported back to fellow board members the information gained by participation at the conference.

Policy Development

Trustees have final authority to approve the policies and procedures affecting student success interventions at their institution. In the end, student success is dependent on the trustees understanding and commitment to academic achievement because the interest and focus of the governing board typically develops into policies approved by the board and implemented by the college employees.

Board members agreed that policy development was a team effort with administration. Trustees noted that since they were not educators, they took their direction from administration regarding policy development and they supported recommendations from the college's educators. Board members did not believe that it was "the role of the board to establish and determine success" outcomes. Rather, it was their responsibility to demand accountability and work with administration to form policy and strategies. Therefore, trustees should "demand student success and then get out of the way of professional educators" to implement practices to meet student success goals and objectives. Board members also agreed it was essential for trustees and educators to work together to develop effective student success policies.

Many of the trustees stated that colleges are beginning the process of reviewing policies to see how each is aligned to student success initiatives. Therefore, after reviewing the college's policies it will be critical for trustees to take the necessary steps

to keep effective policies in place while revising or removing ineffective ones. If ineffective policies are left in place, the institution will have a difficult time meeting its student success goals. Likewise, board members were wary of adopting policies if the direction for carrying out the processes were unclear. Board members, therefore, were carefully considering the impact of each policy and the effect it would have on the institution and its students.

Most board members responded that they had implemented key institutional policies focused on accountability for student persistence, learning and attainment. However, board member responses ranged from no implementation to full implementation for governing board policies that call for closing the gap in educational attainment between low-income students and students of color in comparison with their peers. Therefore, these issues will be an area of concern for board members to address as they develop student success policies at their institutions.

Student Success Policies Aligned to Budget

Board members are increasingly faced with aligning decreasing college resources to institutional priorities. It is essential for trustees to determine if the resources of the college are aligned with meeting the needs of students. All board members stated that it was important to financially support student success initiatives. Financially supporting student success programs is critical for the administration and employees to address the academic challenges of at-risk students. Too often in education, decision-makers endorse policies to improve academic outcomes without devoting vital resources to successfully implement corresponding programs.

Through frequent review of student data reports, board members are able to evaluate the effective and ineffective uses of college resources. Leaders can also compare funding of their college's programs to other colleges of similar size and scope. All of the student success information and data presented to trustees can be used for budget planning. The process is very time consuming, often making organization-wide budget planning stressful for employees. However, with careful and thoughtful planning coupled with a lot of communication about the decisions for making the budget changes, stress can be minimal. Most importantly, it is important for board members to keep each department focused on meeting the needs of students to accomplish student success goals.

SUMMARY

This study examined the extent to which community college governing board's use mechanisms to understand or monitor student success. The study also examined how, if at all, governing boards alter or prioritize their policymaking agenda by reviewing or analyzing briefing of student success interventions.

Trustees participating in this study were committed to improving the quality of life for citizens in their community through academic achievement. For trustees, it was critical for board members to be concerned, active and informed in order to fulfill their role and responsibilities as governing board members. Therefore, this study found that strong leadership from trustees could have a positive student success results.

Trustees use both internal and external mechanisms to understand and monitor student success. Receiving information, reports and recommendations from college

administration, and faculty and staff members was essential in guiding decision-making since most board members are not educators. Board members in the study welcomed collaboration with employees in addressing student success challenges at their colleges. Likewise, while board members also considered the political considerations of community stakeholders in decision-making, they remained true to the mission of the college and the college's focus on student success in addition to relying on data to aid in decision-making and to justify decisions made by the board.

Governing board members also reviewed and analyzed student data briefings frequently at board meetings. However, it is important for board members and educators to understand that looking at a student data report will not provide them with a holistic view of student challenges and successes. Unlike selected admission universities, community colleges are open admission institutions that admit students with multiple at-risk characteristics. Unfortunately, some of the characteristics that are barriers to a community college student's success are not solvable by the college and are simply the result of life events. However, there are many programs and initiatives that colleges can and should provide that are known to improve a student's chance of success. Therefore, collaborative efforts to address student success by board members and college personnel may uncover new practices to enhance success. The challenge for both board members and educators will be to distinguish solvable challenges from those the college cannot solely control. Understanding the reasons why students leave or are unsuccessful academically is an initial step in addressing student success in these communities.

Board members were found to alter and prioritize their policymaking agendas by first transitioning the culture of their college and focusing student success as a priority. Through organizational culture changes, policies were developed which were supported with resources through the college's budget. Board members in this study were hesitant to address or push for policy development if a clear direction to address the issues was uncertain. Trustees do not want to approve a policy that would be ineffective at improving student success or that could be counterproductive. Consequently, board members noted that they were in the early stages of working with educators to address student success policy development. If trustees develop effective policies and make quality decisions concerning investments of resources, colleges may see improvements in student academic achievement. Knowing the type of policies to approve and timing investments through collaboration with administration, faculty and staff members, and students may achieve institutional goals. In addition, board members may uncover solutions when networking with fellow board members at institutions with similar challenges.

Because many community college students face multiple challenges, board members and educators were found to have a strong desire to see all students be successful regardless of their past academic achievements or shortcomings. It is well known that education is the key to improving a person's quality of life, developing informed and responsible citizens, and is critical to the economic development of a community. Disappointingly, most students with hopes of self-improvement are not achieving their educational goals and as a result may abandon their dreams. Therefore,

trustees participating in this study believed that they could improve the lives of others in their communities through student success and they have begun to provide clear pathways to student success at the institutions they serve.

APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following interview questions will be examined:

1. Tell me about your background?
2. What motivated you to run for the board?
3. What officer position do you hold on the board?
4. How long have you been a board member?
5. Do you think your board establishes a climate or culture for the college? If not, could you elaborate? If so, to what extent or how?
6. How would you describe the climate or culture at your college?
7. Do you think the board has a responsibility to identify student success priorities? If not, please elaborate. If so, to what extent? What do you see as your role in identifying student success priorities?
8. Do board members analyze student outcome data, such as recruitment, retention, course completion rates or graduation data? If not, please elaborate. If so, how often. Also, to what extent is student outcome data used make decisions or policies?
9. Do you think the board has a responsibility to establish student success policies? If not, please elaborate. If so, to what extent? What do you see as your role in establishing student success policies?
10. What methods, if any, does the board use to develop student success policies?
11. Do you collaborate with the college President/Chancellor on student success interventions? If so, in what ways do you and the President/Chancellor collaborate?
12. Have any student success policies been introduced and implemented at the college since starting the Achieving the Dream initiative? If so, please discuss the policies.
13. Are student success policies aligned to the budget at your institution? If not, could you elaborate? If so, to what extent are policies aligned to the budget?
14. Do you consider student success in strategic planning? If not, please elaborate. If so, to what extent?
15. As critical issues arise, do you prioritize those issues? Please explain. Do these issues have any effect on student success interventions? Why or why not?
16. Are there factors that motivate your decisions on the board? Please explain.
17. To what extent, if any, does public opinion influence decisions about student success? If not, please elaborate. If so, to what extent? Do you use public opinion data? If not, please elaborate. If so, to what extent?
18. Do you or other board members collect public opinion data? If not, please elaborate. If so, to what extent? What methods are use to collect data? Please elaborate.
19. Are political considerations a factor in decision making? If they are not, please elaborate. If so, to what extent? Do political considerations influence decisions about student success? If they don't, please elaborate. If so, to what extent?
20. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B. SELECTED ITEMS FROM THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE INVENTORY: FOCUS ON STUDENT PERSISTENCE, LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT (CCI)

FOR USE BY THE 2007 BOARD OF TRUSTEES INSTITUTE

SELECTED ITEMS FROM THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE INVENTORY: FOCUS ON STUDENT PERSISTENCE, LEARNING AND ATTAINMENT

The following inventory provides descriptions of eleven characteristics of colleges and universities that are strongly focused on student success – that is, student persistence, learning and attainment. Related to each characteristic is a set of indicators that more fully describe observable institutional practices. The inventory is intended not as a test and not as a checklist, but rather as a tool for prompting institutional review, reflection, discussion – and, ultimately, action aimed at improvement.

NOTE ON INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT

Level and scope of institutional effort and accomplishment with regard to these characteristics and indicators may be rated in terms of the response scale provided below. Use of the numeric scale might be augmented with narrative examples (provided by the institution) describing institutional practices and student behavior, as well as reporting pertinent data. And finally, campus observers may be trained to conduct interviews, focus groups and document review as part of either an internal review or a third-party process to verify and provide feedback on institutional practices.

INSTRUCTIONS

Base your responses to the inventory on the following response scale:

RESPONSE SCALE

[Adapted from Renate Krakauer, Criteria for a Learning College, 2000]

- 0 *No implementation.* There is no evidence that this practice has been implemented in the institution.
- 1 *Under discussion.* This practice is being discussed or is in the planning stages.
- 2 *Marginal implementation.* There are isolated examples of this practice in the institution.
- 3 *Partial implementation.* This practice is being implemented in some areas of the institution in a visible and substantial way.
- 4 *Full implementation.* This practice has been fully implemented across the institution.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This inventory of the characteristics of a college/university focused on student persistence, learning and attainment explicitly honors the “seven principles of good practice” in undergraduate education described by Chickering and Gamson (1987), as well as related research on student engagement (see, for example, Kuh, 2001; Community College Survey of Student Engagement, 2002 and 2003; Kuh, et al, 2005; Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005). The inventory also incorporates items paraphrased or drawn directly from work of Byron McClenney and Kay McClenney (1988), Kay McClenney (2003), Cindy Miles and others at the League for Innovation in the Community College (2000) and Renate Krakauer (2000). Special acknowledgment is due to Austin Doherty and Tim Riordan of Alverno College, to other members of the Alverno-sponsored Student Learning Initiative, and to participants in The Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning.

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Community College Inventory: Focus on Student Persistence, Learning, and Attainment
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PART I – VISION, VALUES AND CULTURE

Characteristic #1: Institution-wide commitment to promoting student persistence, learning, and attainment and to equity in educational outcomes for all students

	0	1	2	3	4
a. The institution has clearly defined its mission, values, and vision, with a central emphasis on student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. A shared sense of the mission, values and vision is held by individuals and groups across the college/university community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The institution has made an explicit, public commitment to achieve equity in educational persistence and attainment across all student groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. The college/university community consistently enacts the high value placed on diversity and cultural competence among students, faculty, staff, administrators and governing board members.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. In pursuit of its mission, the institution has developed a strong culture of evidence. (See Part II)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. The institution promotes and supports broad engagement of the college/university community in processes for planning and priority-setting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. The institution promotes and supports broad engagement of the broader community in processes for planning and priority-setting.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Individuals and groups within the institution demonstrate a collective sense of responsibility for student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART II – THE CULTURE OF EVIDENCE

Characteristic #2: Institutional and individual reflection and action typically prompted and supported by data about student persistence, student learning and institutional performance

	0	1	2	3	4
a. Institutional research and information systems provide systematic, timely, useful, and user-friendly information about student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The institutional culture promotes willingness of governing board members, administrators, faculty, staff and students to rigorously examine and openly discuss institutional performance regarding:					
• student persistence	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• student learning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• student attainment (certificates, degrees, transfer)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The institution is committed to cohort tracking of entering students to determine rates of attainment and to identify areas for improvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. The institution regularly collects, analyzes, and reports data pertaining to the following:					
• successful completion of remedial/developmental courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• developmental students' success in entry-level college courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• successful completion of selected gatekeeper courses (e.g., high-enrollment/high failure-rate courses such as college algebra, freshman composition, anatomy and physiology, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• rate of successful course completion for all courses (C or better)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• student persistence – re-enrollment from one term to the next	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• completion of certificates and associate degrees	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Data depicting student persistence, learning, and attainment are routinely disaggregated and reported by student characteristics including:					
• gender	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• race/ethnicity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• income level	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. The institution regularly assesses its performance and progress in implementing educational practices which evidence shows will contribute to higher levels of student persistence and learning.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform institutional decisions regarding:					
• strategic priorities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• resource allocation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• faculty and staff development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• improvements in programs and services for learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART III – STRATEGIC FOCUS, PLANNING, AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Characteristic #3: Fully integrated processes for institutional evaluation, planning, and resource allocation

	0	1	2	3	4
a. The institution has a strategic plan that clearly and succinctly states its goals for future development.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The strategic plan is used to guide operational planning for each fiscal year.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Strategic focus is created through the identification of a small number of clear priorities for institutional action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. The institution demonstrates its ability to stop doing things that are off-mission, low-priority, and/or ineffective in promoting student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. The results of student and institutional assessments are used routinely to inform plans for improvement in programs and services.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Members of the campus community participate extensively in the planning and priority-setting processes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Resources are consistently allocated and re-allocated to address priorities identified through the planning process.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART IV – STUDENT LEARNING

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Characteristic #4: Clearly defined outcomes for student learning

	0	1	2	3	4
a. The institution has clearly defined required student learning outcomes...					
• for core abilities/ general education (degree level)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• for each program/major area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• for each course	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Statements of required learning outcomes are prominently and publicly displayed and communicated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Statements of required learning outcomes are congruent with the mission and values of the institution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Characteristic #5: Systematic assessment and documentation of student learning

	0	1	2	3	4
a. Faculty members have designed and/or identified and implemented an array of appropriate assessments of student learning...					
• in all credit courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• in the program/major area	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• in core abilities/general education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Faculty members have developed common criteria or rubrics that are used in ascertaining and documenting each student's level of attainment of required learning outcomes.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

LEARNING PROCESS

Characteristic #6: Student participation in a diverse array of engaging learning experiences that are aligned with required outcomes and designed in accord with "good educational practice"

	0	1	2	3	4
a. Faculty members clearly articulate learning outcomes at different levels of the curriculum; consequently, prerequisites are clear and rational, and sequential levels are appropriately aligned with one another.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The institution has built partnerships with employers and community-based organizations leading to hands-on experiential learning experiences for students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Students typically participate in opportunities for experiential learning (e.g., service learning, internships, cooperative learning).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Course requirements are purposefully designed to promote out-of-classroom learning experiences for students (e.g., group projects, faculty conferences, related community service, etc.).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Faculty members routinely identify high-failure-rate courses and undertake collaborative re-design of those courses to promote student success while maintaining high quality standards.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART IV – STUDENT LEARNING (continued)

LEARNING PROCESS (continued)	0	1	2	3	4
f. The institution has developed curricula with explicit career pathways that feature:					
• articulation with secondary school programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• strong links between basic skills/ ESL/ developmental courses and college-level courses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• certificate programs providing the first step to the A.A.S. degree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
• articulation with related baccalaureate programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Expectations regarding students' responsibilities in the learning process are explicitly stated and are communicated to all students by faculty, counselors, and fellow students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
 Characteristic #7: <i>Effective</i> developmental/remedial education, tutoring, and other appropriate support services for learners who are under-prepared for college-level work					
	0	1	2	3	4
a. The institution conducts thorough reviews of current programs for under-prepared students to determine student success rates and identify needs for improvement.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Mandatory assessment and course placement policies have been implemented for entering students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Exit competencies for developmental education and ESL courses are fully aligned with competencies required for success in entry-level college courses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Faculty who teach developmental courses do so voluntarily and have undergone training in appropriate teaching strategies.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART V – STUDENT AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Characteristic #8: A planned array of student and academic support services, designed in accord with evidence-based best practices for optimal impact on student persistence, learning, and attainment

	0	1	2	3	4
a. All college/university processes (financial aid application, registration, etc.) are student-friendly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. A strong and systematic advising system ensures that each student develops an academic plan.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The advising process stresses steps toward degree attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. The institution employs informational and instructional technology in ways specifically targeted to improve student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Fundraising efforts are focused on providing financial aid to low-income students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. Strong partnerships with K-12 systems ease the transition for high school graduates coming to the institution.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Strong articulation agreements with senior colleges promote smooth transfer without inappropriate loss of credit for community college students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART VI – THE PEOPLE OF THE COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

Characteristic #9: Emphasis on student persistence, learning, and attainment in processes for recruitment, hiring, orientation, deployment, evaluation, and development of personnel

	0	1	2	3	4
a. The roles of faculty, staff, and administrators are defined in terms of functions and behaviors that contribute to student success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Staffing patterns and workload arrangements reflect a focus on student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. Employment practices reflect high value placed on diversity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. Personnel recruitment, selection, and orientation processes explicitly reflect the focus on student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. Systematic evaluation of teaching effectiveness includes evaluation by both peers and students.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
f. At all levels of the institution, personnel evaluation criteria and processes reflect a focus on activities and behaviors that contribute to student learning – and promote learning by the person being evaluated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
g. Reward systems recognize and reward outstanding contributions to improving student persistence, learning, and attainment and creating more effective learning environments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
h. Faculty and staff development opportunities are focused on improvement of student persistence, learning, and attainment and informed by the results of student and institutional assessments.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART VII – LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

Characteristic #10: Leadership behavior consistently reflects the focus on student persistence, learning, and attainment, as well as equity in student outcomes.

	0	1	2	3	4
a. Institutional leaders demonstrate a commitment to strengthening student persistence, learning, and attainment — a commitment that extends beyond rhetoric to actions in resource allocation, policymaking, and data-driven decision making.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. The CEO and other institutional leaders frequently use data about student persistence and learning to drive decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

PART VIII – INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

Characteristic #11: Key institutional policies promoting focus on and accountability for student persistence, learning, and attainment.

	0	1	2	3	4
a. Key institutional documents (e.g., mission and vision statements, college catalogue, program descriptions) reflect the focus on student success.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
b. Academic policies (e.g., provisions for registration, assessment and course placement upon entry, class changes, college orientation, first-year experience, feedback on academic progress, etc.) reflect priority placed on student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
c. The governing board has established an explicit policy that calls for closing the gap in educational attainment between low-income students and students of color in comparison with their peers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
d. The governing board regularly examines key performance indicators of student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
e. The governing board supports resource allocation and re-allocation to promote improvement in student persistence, learning, and attainment.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

1. Title

Community college governing boards: Building communities through student success

2. Conducted By:

Wendi C. Prater, Community College Leadership Program (CCLP), Higher Education Administration Office, The University of Texas at Austin; 512-934-0663

Dr. John Roueche (Advisor), CCLP-Higher Education Administration, The University of Texas at Austin; 512-471-7545

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. Wendi Prater will answer any questions you have about the research. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part in the study. Your participation is entirely voluntary. In addition, you can stop your participation at any time by simply telling the researcher.

3. Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine to what extent community college governing boards use mechanisms to understand or monitor student success. In addition, this study seeks to understand how, if at all, governing boards alter or prioritize their policymaking agenda by reviewing or analyzing briefings of student success interventions.

Research Questions for the study:

- To what extent do community college governing boards use mechanisms to understand or monitor student success?
- To what extent do governing boards review or analyze briefings of student success interventions?
- How, if at all, do governing boards alter or prioritize their student success policymaking agenda?

4. If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to do the following things:

Participate in an interview with the researcher to be scheduled at your institution, office or the 2008 Board of Trustee Institute. In addition, you will be asked to complete the Community College Inventory (CCI).

5. Time:

Interviews will require approximately 90 minutes per person. The survey will require approximately 30 minutes.

6. Risks and Benefits:

The risk associated with this study is no greater than everyday life. Practices will be implemented to assure confidentiality; however, a possible risk involves the loss of confidentiality. The potential benefits of the study are to understand the roles, actions and behaviors of community college governing boards.

7. Confidentially:

Interviews will be audio or videotaped. Tapes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. Tapes will be kept in a secure place (e.g., a locked file cabinet in the investigator's office). Tapes will be heard or viewed only for research purposes by the investigator and his or her associates unless prior written consent is obtained. In addition, tapes will be retained in a secure place for possible future analysis.

The records of this study will be stored securely and kept private. Authorized persons from The University of Texas at Austin, and members of the Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review the research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. All publications will exclude any information that will make it possible to identify you as a subject unless written approval is obtained from the individual interview and survey participants to include quotes attributable to the individual(s).
(Please see signature lines below.)

Compensation:

No compensation will be provided.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have any questions about the study please ask. If you have questions later or want additional information, please call: Wendi C. Prater; phone: 512-934-0663; email: wecprater@mail.utexas.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, (512) 232-4383.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

We may wish to present some of the tapes from this study at conventions or as demonstrations in classrooms. Please sign below if you are willing to allow us to do so with your tape.

I hereby give permission for the video (audio) tape made for this research study to be also used for educational purposes.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

We may wish to include some of your quotes from the qualitative interview with the researcher in publications, at conventions, or as demonstrations in classrooms. Please sign below if you are willing to allow us to include your quotes and attribute them to you. I hereby give permission for my quotes from the qualitative interview to be also used in publications, at conventions, or as demonstrations in classrooms.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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This manuscript was typed by the author.